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WORKS

Of the Most Reverend

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

LATE

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY,

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. VIII.

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The CONTENTS.

SERM. CLXXIII. The danger of impenitence, where the gospel is preached. Mat. xi. 21. 22. *Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you* page 1

SERM. CLXXIV. CLXXV. CLXXVI. CLXXVII. Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation. 2. Tim. i 10. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel* 14. 30. 47. 58

SERM. CLXXVIII. CLXXIX. CLXXX. CLXXXI. CLXXXII. Of the certainty of a future judgment. Of the person by whom the world shall be judged. Of the persons who are to be judged. Of the actions for which men will be accountable. Of the sentence to be passed at the day of judgment. 2 Cor. v. 10. *For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil* 75. 89. 99. 109. 120

SERM. CLXXXIII. The uncertainty of the day of judgment, considered and improved. Mark xiii. 32. 33. *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is* 183

SERM. CLXXXIV. The certainty and blessedness of the resurrection of true Christians. 1 Thess. iv. 14. *For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him* 153

SERM. CLXXXV. CLXXXVI. Of the happiness of good men in the future state. 1 John iii. 2. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* 171. 182

SERM. CLXXXVII. The wisdom of religion justified, in the different ends of good and bad men. Prov. xiv. 32. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death* 194

SERM. CLXXXVIII. The usefulness of considering our latter end. Psal. xc. 12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom* 217

SERM. CLXXXIX. CXC. CXCI. The life of Jesus Christ considered, as our example. 1 Pet. ii. 21. ----*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps* 234. 247. 265

SERM. CXCII. The sufferings of Christ considered, as a proper means of our salvation. 1 Cor. i. 23. 24. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;*

foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God 278

SERM. CXCIII. The evidence of our Saviour's resurrection. Acts i. 3. *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God* 293

SERM. CXCIV. The possibility of the resurrection asserted and proved. Acts xxvi. 8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* 307

SERM. CXCV. The resurrection of our Saviour considered, as an argument for seeking things above. Col. iii. 1. 2. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth* 321

SERM. CXCVI. The circumstances and benefits of our Saviour's ascension. Acts i. 9. 10. 11. *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven* 333

SERM. CXCVII. Of the gift of tongues conferred on the Apostles. Acts ii. 1. 2. 3. 4. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance* 347

SERM. CXCVIII. Of the coming of the Holy Ghost, as an Advocate for Christ. John xvi. 7. 8. *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment* 361

SERM. CXCIX. Of the coming of the Holy Ghost, as a guide to the Apostles. John xvi. 12. 13. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now; howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth* 376

SERM. CC. CCI. Of the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost on the minds of Christians John vii. 39. *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified* 388 400

SERM. CCII. The fruits of the Spirit, the same with moral virtues. Eph. v. 9. *For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth* 413

SERM. CCIII. The necessity of supernatural grace, in order to a Christian life. John xv. 5. *For without me ye can do nothing* 428

SER-

SERMON CLXXIII.

The danger of impenitence, where the gospel is preached.

MATTH. xi. 21, 22.

Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

AFTER our blessed Saviour had instructed, and sent forth his disciples, he himself went abroad to preach unto the cities of Israel; particularly, he spent much time in the cities of Galilee, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, preaching the gospel to them, and working many and great miracles among them; but with little or no success: which was the cause of his denouncing this terrible woe against them, ver. 20. *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee Chorazin,* &c.

In which words our Saviour declares the sad and miserable condition of those two cities, Chorazin and Bethsaida, which had neglected such an opportunity, and resisted and withstood such means of repentance, as would have effectually reclaimed the most wicked cities and people that can be instanced in any age, Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom; and therefore he tells them, that their condition was much worse, and that they should fall under a heavier sentence at the day of judgment, than the people of those cities, whom they had always looked upon as the greatest sinners that ever were in the world. This is the plain meaning of the words in general; but yet there are some difficulties in them which I shall endeavour to clear, and then proceed to raise such ob-

observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

The difficulties are these:

1. What repentance is here spoken of; whether an external repentance, in shew and appearance only, or an inward, and real and sincere repentance.

2. In what sense it is said, that *Tyre and Sidon would have repented.*

3. What is meant by their *would have repented long ago.*

4. How this assertion of our Saviour's, that miracles would have converted Tyre and Sidon, is reconcilable with that other saying of his, Luke xvi. 31. in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that *those who believed not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

1. What repentance is here spoken of; whether a mere external and hypocritical repentance, in shew and appearance only, or an inward, and real and sincere repentance.

The reason of this doubt depends upon the different theories of divines, about the sufficiency of grace accompanying the outward means of repentance, and whether an irresistible degree of God's grace be necessary to repentance; for they who deny sufficient grace to accompany the outward means of repentance, and assert an irresistible degree of God's grace necessary to repentance, are forced to say that our Saviour here speaks of a mere external repentance: because if he spake of an inward and sincere repentance, then it must be granted, that sufficient inward grace did accompany the miracles that were wrought in Chorazin and Bethsaida, to bring men to repentance; because what was afforded to them, would have brought Tyre and Sidon to repentance. And that which would have effected a thing, cannot be denied to be sufficient; so that unless our Saviour here speaks of a mere external repentance, either the outward means of repentance, as preaching and miracles, must be granted to be sufficient to bring men to repentance, without the inward operation of God's grace upon the minds of men, or else a sufficient degree of God's grace must be acknowledged to accompany the outward means

means of repentance. Again, if an irresistible degree of grace be necessary to true repentance, it is plain, Chorazin and Bethsaida had it not, because they did not repent; and yet, without this, Tyre and Sidon could not sincerely have repented: therefore our Saviour here must speak of a mere external repentance. Thus some argue, as they do likewise concerning the repentance of Nineveh, making that also to be merely external, because they are loth to allow true repentance to heathens.

But it seems very plain, that our Saviour does speak of an inward, and true and sincere repentance; and therefore the doctrines that will not admit this, are not true: for our Saviour speaks of the same kind of repentance, that he upbraided them with the want of, in the verse before the text. *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not;* that is, because they were not brought to a sincere repentance, by his preaching which was confirmed by such great miracles. It is true, indeed, he mentions the outward signs and expressions of repentance, when he says, *they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes;* but not as excluding inward and real repentance, but supposing it, as is evident from what is said in the next verse, *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you:* for tho' an external and hypocritical repentance may prevail with God to put off temporal judgments, yet surely it will be but a very small, if any mitigation of our condemnation at the day of judgment: so that the repentance here spoken of cannot, without great violence to the scope and design of our Saviour's argument, be understood only of an external shew and appearance of repentance.

II. The next difficulty to be cleared, is, in what sense it is here said, that *if the mighty works which were done* by our Saviour among the Jews, *had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented.*

Some, to avoid the inconvenience which they apprehend to be in the more strict and literal sense of the words, look upon them as hyperbolical, as we say, "Such a thing would move a stone," or the like, when

we would expreſs ſomething to be very ſad and grievous; ſo here, to aggravate the impenitence of the Jews, our Saviour ſays, that they reſiſted thoſe means of repentance, which one would think ſhould almoſt have prevailed upon the greateſt and moſt obdurate ſinners that ever were; but not intending to affirm any ſuch thing.

But there is no colour for this, if we conſider that our Saviour reaſons from the ſuppoſition of ſuch a thing, that therefore the caſe of *Tyre* and *Sidon* would really be *more tolerable at the day of judgment than theirs*, becauſe *they would have repented*, but the *Jews did not.*

Others perhaps underſtand the words too ſtrictly, as if our Saviour had ſpoken according to what he certainly foreknew would have happened to the people of Tyre and Sidon, if ſuch miracles had been wrought among them. And no doubt but in that caſe God did certainly know what they would have done; but yet I ſhould rather chuſe to underſtand the words as ſpoken popularly, according to what in all human appearance and probability would have happened if ſuch external means of repentance, accompanied with an ordinary grace of God, had been afforded to them of *Tyre and Sidon.* And thus the old Latin interpreter ſeems to have underſtood the next words, *If the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom,* ἔμειναν ἄν, ſorte manſiſſent, *it would perhaps have remained to this day, in all likelihood it had continued till now.* Much the ſame with that paſſage of the Prophet, Ezek. iii. 5, 6. *Thou art not ſent to a people of a ſtrange ſpeech, and of a hard language, but to the houſe of Iſrael: Surely had I ſent thee to them, they would have hearkned unto thee;* that is, in all probability they would; there is little doubt to be made of the contrary. And this is ſufficient foundation for our Saviour's reaſoning afterwards, that *it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them.* And if we may judge what they would have done before, by what they did afterward, there is more than probability for it: for we read in the 21ſt chapter of the Acts, ver. 3. and ver. 27. that the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon received the goſpel, and kindly

kindly entertained St. Paul, when the Jews rejected them both. The

III. Thing to be cleared is, What is meant by *long ago: they would have repented long ago.*

Some understand this, as if our Saviour had said, they would not have stood out so long against so much preaching, and so many miracles; but would at first have repented, long before our Saviour gave over Chorazin and Bethsaida for obstinate and incorrigible sinners; they would not only have repented at last, but much sooner, and without so much ado.

But this does not seem to be the meaning of the words; but our Saviour seems to refer to those ancient times long ago; when the Prophets denounced judgments against Tyre and Sidon, particularly the Prophet Ezekiel; and to say, that if in those days the preaching of that Prophet had been accompanied with such miracles as our Saviour wrought in the cities of Galilee, Tyre and Sidon would in those days have repented.

The last and greatest difficulty of all is, how this assertion of our Saviour, that miracles would have converted Tyre and Sidon, is reconcileable with that discourse of our Saviour's, Luke xvi. in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that *those who would not believe Moses and the Prophets, would not have been persuaded though one had rose from the dead.*

The true answer to which difficulty, in short, is this; that when our Saviour says, *if they believe not Moses and the Prophets; neither will they be persuaded tho' one rose from the dead;* he does not hereby weaken the force of miracles, or their aptness to convince men, and bring them to repentance, but rather confirm it, because Moses and the Prophets had the attestation of many and great miracles; and therefore there was no reason to think, that they who would not believe the writings and doctrine of Moses and the Prophets which had the confirmation of so many miracles, and was owned by themselves to have so, should be wrought upon by one particular miracle, *the coming of one from the dead, and speaking unto them;* or, however this might move and astonish them for the present, yet it was not likely that the grace of God should concur with such

an extraordinary means, to render it effectual to their conversion and repentance, who had wilfully despised, and obstinately rejected that which had a much greater confirmation than the discourse of a man risen from the dead, and was appointed by God for the ordinary and standing means of bringing men to repentance. So that our Saviour might with reason enough pronounce that Tyre and Sidon, who never had a standing revelation of God to bring them to repentance, nor had rejected it, would upon miracles extraordinarily wrought among them, have repented, and yet deny it elsewhere to be likely, that they who rejected a standing revelation of God, confirmed by miracles, which called them to repentance, would probably be brought to repentance by a particular miracle, or that God should afford his grace to make it effectual for their repentance and salvation.

The words being thus cleared, I come now to raise such observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

I. I observe from this discourse of our Saviour, that miracles are of great force and efficacy to bring men to repentance.

This our Saviour's discourse here supposeth; otherwise their impenitence had not been so criminal and inexcusable upon that account, *that such mighty works had been done among them,* as would probably have prevailed upon some of the worst people that had been in the world: for such were the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, guilty of great covetousness and fraud, pride and luxury, the usual sins of places of great traffick and commerce: and such, to be sure, was Sodom; and yet our Saviour tells us, that the miracles which he had wrought in the cities of Israel, would, in all probability, have brought those great sinners to repentance, namely, by bringing them to faith, and convincing them of the truth and divinity of that doctrine which he preached unto them, and which contains such powerful arguments to repentance and amendment of life.

II. I observe likewise from our Saviour's discourse, that God is not always obliged to work miracles for the conversion of sinners. It is great goodness in him to

to afford sufficient means of repentance to men, as he did to Tyre and Sidon, in calling them to repentance by his Prophet, though such miracles were not wrought among them, as God thought fit to accompany our Saviour's preaching withal.

This I observe, to prevent a kind of bold and saucy objection, which some would perhaps be apt to make; If Tyre and Sidon would have repented, had such miracles been wrought among them, as our Saviour wrought in Chorazin and Bethsaida, why were they not wrought, that they might have repented? To which it is sufficient answer to say, that God is not obliged to do all that is possible to be done, to reclaim men from their sins; he is not obliged to overpower their wills, and to work irresistibly upon their minds, which he can easily do; he is not obliged to work miracles for every particular man's conviction; nor where he vouchsafeth to do this, is he obliged always to work the greatest and most convincing miracles; his goodness will not suffer him to omit what is necessary and sufficient to bring men to repentance and happiness; nay, beyond this he many times does more; but it is sufficient to vindicate the justice and goodness of God; that he is not wanting to us, in affording the means necessary to reclaim us from our sins, and to bring us to goodness. That which is properly our part, is to make use of those means which God affords us to become better, and not to prescribe to him how much he should do for us; to be thankful that he hath done so much, and not to find fault with him for having done no more.

III. I observe farther from our Saviour's discourse, that the external means of repentance which God affords to men, do suppose an inward grace of God accompanying them, sufficiently enabling men to repent, if it be not their own fault; I say, a sufficient grace of God accompanying the outward means of repentance, till, by our wilful and obstinate neglect and resistance, and opposition of this grace, we provoke God to withdraw it from the means, or else to withdraw both the grace, and the means from us; otherwise impenitence after such external means afforded, would be no new and special fault. For if the concurrence of God's

grace

grace with the outward means be neceſſary to work repentance, then the impenitence of thoſe to whom this grace is not afforded, which yet is neceſſary to repentance, is neither any new ſin, nor any new aggravation of their former impenitence. For no man can imagine that the juſt God will charge men with new guilt, and increaſe their condemnation, for remaining impenitent in ſuch circumſtances in which it is impoſſible for them to repent.

IV. I obſerve from this diſcourſe of our Saviour's, that an irreſiſtible degree of grace is not neceſſary to repentance, nor commonly afforded to thoſe who do repent. God may, where he pleaſeth, without injury to any man, over-power his will, and ſtop him in his courſe, and hinder him from making himſelf miſerable, and by an irreſiſtible right convince him of his error and the evil of his ways, and bring him to a better mind: but this God ſeldom does; and when he does it, it is very probable it is not ſo much for their own ſakes, as to make them inſtruments of good to others. Thus, by a ſecret but over-powering influence, he over-ruled the diſciples to follow our Saviour, and to leave their calling and relations, and all their temporal concernments to do it. But one of the moſt remarkable examples of this extraordinary grace of God, is St. Paul, who was violently ſtopt in his courſe of perſecuting the Chriſtians, and convinced of his ſin, and brought over to Chriſtianity, in a very extraordinary and forcible manner. And of this miraculous and extraordinary converſion, God himſelf gives this account, that *he was a choſen veſſel unto him, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Iſrael*, Acts ix. 15. and St. Paul tells us, Gal. i. 15, 16. that for this end God had *ſeparated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, and revealed his Son to him*, in that extraordinary manner, *that he might preach among the Heathen*.

But generally God does not bring men thus to repentance: Nor is it neceſſary he ſhould. For if an irreſiſtible degree of grace were always neceſſary to bring men to repentance, there could be no difference between the impenitence of Chorazin and Bethſaida, and of Tyre

Tyre and Sidon. For, according to this doctrine of the necessity of irresistible grace to the conversion of every man, it is evident, that Tyre and Sidon neither could, nor would have repented, without an irresistible degree of God's grace, accompanying the outward means of repentance which he afforded to them; because such a degree of grace is necessary to repentance, and without it, it is impossible for any man to repent. But then it is as plain, on the contrary, that if Chorazin and Bethsaida had had the same irresistible degree of God's grace, together with the outward means of repentance afforded to them, that they would have repented as certainly as Tyre and Sidon. Where then is the reason of upbraiding the impenitence of the one, more than of the other? where the aggravation of the one's guilt above the other? where the justice of punishing the impenitence of Chorazin and Bethsaida, more than theirs of Tyre and Sidon? For upon this supposition, they must either have repented both alike, or have been both equally impenitent. The sum of what I have said, is this, that if no man does, nor can repent, without such a degree of God's grace as cannot be resisted, no man's repentance is commendable, nor is one man's impenitence more blameable than another's; Chorazin and Bethsaida can be in no more fault for continuing impenitent, than Tyre and Sidon were For either this irresistible grace is afforded to men or not: if it be, their repentance is necessary, and they cannot help it; if it be not, their repentance is impossible, and consequently their impenitence is necessary, and they cannot help it neither.

V. I observe from the main scope of our Saviour's discourse, that the sins and impenitence of men receive their aggravation, and consequently shall have their punishment, proportionable to the opportunities and means of repentance which those persons have enjoyed and neglected.

For what is here said of miracles, is by equality of reason likewise true of all other advantages and means of repentance and salvation. The reason why miracles will be such an aggravation of the condemnation of men is, because they are so proper and powerful a means

means to convince them of the truth and divinity of that doctrine which calls them to repentance. So that all those means which God affords to us of the knowledge of our duty, of conviction of the evil and danger of a sinful course, are so many helps and motives to repentance, and consequently will prove so many aggravations of our sin and punishment, if we continue impenitent. The

VI. And last observation, and which naturally follows from the former, is this, that the case of those who are impenitent under the gospel, is of all others the most dangerous, and their damnation shall be heaviest and most severe.

And this brings the case of these cities here in the text home to ourselves. For in truth there is no material difference between the case of Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum, and of ourselves in this city and nation, who enjoy the clear light of the gospel, with all the freedom, and all the advantages that any people ever did. The mercies of God to this nation have been very great, especially in bringing us out of that darkness and superstition, which covered this western part of the world; in rescuing us from that great corruption and degeneracy of the Christian religion which prevailed among us, by so early and so regular a reformation; and in continuing so long this great blessing to us. The judgments of God have been likewise very great upon us for our sins. *God hath manifested himself by terrible things in righteousness;* our eyes have seen many and dismal calamities in the space of a few years, which call loudly upon us to repent and turn to God. God hath afforded us the most effectual means of repentance, and hath taken the most effectual course of bringing us to it. And though our blessed Saviour does not speak to us in person, nor do we at this day see miracles wrought among us, as the Jews did; yet we have the doctrine which our blessed Saviour preached, faithfully transmitted to us, and a credible relation of the miracles wrought for the confirmation of that doctrine, and many other arguments to persuade us of the truth of it, which those to whom our Saviour spake had not, nor could not then have, taken from

from the accomplishing of our Saviour's predictions, after his death: the speedy propagation and wonderful success of this doctrine in the world, by weak and inconsiderable means, against all the power and opposition of the world; the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, according to our Saviour's prophecy, besides many more that might be mentioned. And, which is a mighty advantage to us, we are free from those prejudices against the person of our Saviour and his doctrine, which the Jews by the reverence which they bore to their rulers and teachers, were generally possessed withal; we are brought up in the belief of it, and have drunk it in by education; and if we believe it as we all profess to do, we have all the obligation and all the arguments to repentance, which the Jews could possibly have from the miracles which they saw; for they were means of repentance to them no otherwise than as they brought them to the belief of our Saviour's doctrine, which called them to repentance.

So that if we continue impenitent, the same woe is denounced against us that is against Chorazin and Bethsaida; and we may be said with Capernaum, *to be lifted up to heaven*, by the enjoyment of the most excellent means and advantages of salvation that any people ever did; which if we neglect, and still continue wicked and impenitent under them, we may justly fear, that with them *we shall be thrown down to hell*, and have our place in the lowest part of that dismal dungeon, and in the very centre of that fiery furnace.

Never was there greater cause to upbraid the impenitence of any people, than of us, considering the means and opportunities which we enjoy; and never had any greater reason to fear a severer doom, than we have. Impenitence in a Heathen is a great sin; else how should God judge the world? But God takes no notice of that, in comparison of the impenitence of Christians, who enjoy the gospel, and are convinced of the truth, and upon the greatest reason in the world profess to believe it. We Christians have all the obligations to repentance, that reason and revelation, nature and grace can lay upon us. Art thou convinced that thou hast sinned, and done that which is contrary to thy duty, and there-

by

by provoked the wrath of God, and incenſed his juſtice againſt thee? As thou art a man, and upon the ſtock of natural principles, thou art obliged to repentance. The ſame light of reaſon which diſcovers to thee the errors of thy life, and challengeth thee for thy impiety and intemperance, for thy injuſtice and oppreſſion, for thy pride and paſſion; the ſame natural conſcience which accuſeth thee of any miſcarriages, does oblige thee to be ſorry for them, *to turn from thy evil ways*, and *to break off thy ſins by repentance*. For nothing can be more unreaſonable, than for a man to know a fault, and yet not think himſelf bound to be ſorry for it; to be convinced of the evil of his ways, and not to think himſelf obliged by that very conviction to turn from it, and forſake it. If there be any ſuch thing as a natural *law written in mens hearts*, which the Apoſtle tell us the Heathens had, it is impoſſible to imagine, but that the law which obliges men not to tranſgreſs, ſhould oblige them to repentance in caſe of tranſgreſſion. And this every man in the world is bound to, though he had never ſeen the bible, nor heard of the name of Chriſt. And the revelation of the goſpel doth not ſuperſede this obligation, but adds new ſtrength and force to it: And by how much this duty of repentance is more clearly revealed by our bleſſed Saviour in the goſpel; by how much the arguments which the goſpel uſeth to perſuade men, and encourage them to repentance, are greater and more powerful; by ſo much is the impenitence of thoſe who live under the goſpel the more inexcuſable.

Had we only ſome faint hopes of God's mercy, a doubtful opinion and weak perſuaſion of the rewards and puniſhments of another world; yet we have a law within us, which, upon the probability of theſe conſiderations, would oblige us to repentance. Indeed if men were aſſured upon good grounds, that there would be no future rewards and puniſhments; then the ſanction of the law were gone, and it would loſe its force and obligation: or if we did deſpair of the mercy of God, and had good reaſon to think repentance impoſſible, or that it would do us no good; in that caſe there would be no ſufficient motive and argument to repentance: for no man can return to his duty, without re-

returning to the love of God and goodness; and no man can return to the love of God, who believes that he bears an implacable hatred against him, and is resolved to make him miserable for ever. During this persuasion, no man can repent. And this seems to be the reason, why the devils continue impenitent.

But the heathens were not without hopes of God's mercy, and upon those small hopes which they had, they encouraged themselves unto repentance; as you may see in the instance of the Ninevites, *Let them turn every one from his evil ways, and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Jonah iii. 8, 9. But if we, who have the clearest discoveries, and the highest assurance of this, who profess to believe that God hath declared himself placable to all mankind, that *he is in Christ reconciling the world to himself*, and that upon our repentance *he will not impute our sins to us*; if we, to whom *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, and to whom *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*; if after all this, we still go on in an impenitent course, what shall we be able to plead in excuse of ourselves at that great day? The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment against such an impenitent generation, and condemn it; because they repented upon the terror of lighter threatnings, and upon the encouragement of weaker hopes.

And therefore it concerns us, who call ourselves Christians, and enjoy the clear revelation of the gospel, to look about us, and take heed how we continue in an evil course. For if we remain impenitent, after all the arguments which the gospel, super-added to the light of nature, affords to us to bring us to repentance, it shall not only be more tolerable for the men of Nineveh, but for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, the most wicked and impenitent heathens, at the day of judgment, than for us. For, because we have stronger arguments, and more powerful encouragements to repentance, than they had, if we do not repent, we shall meet with a heavier doom, and a fiercer damnation. The hea-

then world had many excuses to plead for themselves, which we have not. *The times of that ignorance God winked at: but now commands all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

SERMON CLXXIV.

Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 Tim. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

The first Sermon on this Text.

THE design of the Apostle in these two epistles to Timothy, is to direct him how he ought to demean himself, in the office which he bore in the church; which he does in the first epistle: and to encourage him in his work; which he does here in the second: in which, after his usual salutation, he endeavours to arm him against the fear of those persecutions, and the shame of those reproaches, which would probably attend him in the work of the gospel, ver. 8. *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling:* as if he had said, The God whom thou serveſt in this employment, and by whose power thou art strengthened, is he that *hath saved and called us with an holy calling*, that is, it is he who, by Jesus Christ, hath brought salvation to us, and called

called us to his holy profession; *not according to our works*, that is, not that we, by any thing that we have done, have deserved this at his hand, but *according to his own purpose and grace*, that is, according to his own gracious purpose, *which was given us in Christ before the world began*, that is, which from all eternity he decreed and determined to accomplish by Jesus Christ; *but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ*; that is, which gracious purpose of his is now clearly discovered by our Saviour Jesus Christ's coming into the world, *who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

Which words express to us two happy effects of Christ's appearance: 1. *The abolishing of death*; and, 2. *The bringing of life and immortality to light.* In the handling of these words, I shall,

First, Open to you the meaning of the several expressions in the text.

Secondly, Shew what our Saviour Jesus Christ did towards *the abolishing of death*, and *bringing to light life and immortality*.

For the first, I shall shew,

I. What is here meant by *the appearing of Jesus Christ*.

II. What by the *abolishing of death*.

III. What by *bringing to light life and immortality*.

I. What is here meant by *the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ*. The scripture useth several phrases to express this thing to us. As it was the gracious design of God the Father, so it is called, *the giving of his Son*, or *sending him into the world*. John iii. 16. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*. Gal. iv. 4. *In the fulness of time God sent his Son*. As it was the voluntary undertaking of God the Son, so it is called *his coming into the world*. In relation to his incarnation, whereby he was made visible to us in his body, and likewise in reference to the obscure promises, and prophecies, and types of the Old Testament, it is called his *manifestation*, or *appearance*. So the apostle expresseth it, 1 John iii. 5. *Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins*; by which we are to understand primarily his incarnation, his appearing in our nature, whereby he

became visible to us. As he was God, he could not appear to us, *dwelling in light and glory, not to be approached* by us in this state of mortality, and therefore he cloathed himself in flesh, that he might appear and become manifest to us.

I say, by his *appearing* we are primarily to understand his incarnation: yet not only that, but likewise all that was consequent upon this, the actions of his life, and his death and resurrection: because all these concur to the producing of these happy effects mentioned in the text.

II. What is meant by *the abolishing of death.* By this we are not to understand, that Christ, by his appearance, hath rooted death out of the world, so that men are no longer subject to it. For we see that even good men, and those who are partakers of the benefits of Christ's death, are still subject to the common law of mortality: but this expression of Christ's having *abolished death,* signifies the conquest and victory which Christ hath gained over death in his own person, in that after he was dead, and laid in his grave, he rose again from the dead, he freed himself from the bands of death, and broke loose from the fetters of it, they *not being able to hold him,* as the expression is, Acts ii. 24. and consequently hath, by this victory over it, given us an assurance of a resurrection to a better life. For since Christ hath abolished death, and triumphed over it, and thereby over the powers of darkness; (for so the Apostle tells us, that *by his death,* and that which followed it, his resurrection from the dead, *he hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil* The devil, he contributed all he could to the death of Christ, by tempting Judas to betray him, and engaging all his instruments in the procuring of it; as he had before brought in death into the world, by tempting the first man to sin, upon which death ensued; thus far he prevailed, and thought his kingdom was safe, having procured the death of him who was so great an enemy to it; but Christ, by rising from the dead, defeats the devil of his design, and plainly conquers him, who had arrogated to himself the power of death;) I say, since Christ hath thus vanquished death, and triumph-

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ed over it, and him that had the power of it, death hath lost its dominion, and Christ hath taken the whole power and disposal of it; as you find, Rev. i. 18. *I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.* Now, Christ hath not only thus conquered death for himself, but likewise for all those who believe on him; so that death shall not be able to keep them for ever under its power: But Christ, by the same power whereby he raised up himself from the dead, will also *quicken our mortal bodies*, and raise them up to a new life; for he keeps *the keys of hell and death:* and as a reward of his sufferings and submission to death, he hath power conferred upon him, *to give eternal life to as many as he pleases.* In this sense death, though it be not quite chased out of the world, yet it is virtually and in effect *abolished by the appearance of Jesus Christ*, having in a great measure, lost its power and dominion; and since Christ hath assured us of a final rescue from it, the power of it is rendered insignificant and inconsiderable, and the sting and terror of it is taken away. So the Apostle tells us in the forementioned place, Heb. ii. 14, 15. that Christ having, *by death, destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, he hath delivered those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* And not only the power and terror of death is, for the present, in a great measure taken away; but it shall at last be utterly destroyed: So the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 26. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;* which makes the Apostle in the latter end of this chapter, to break forth into that triumph, ver. 54, 55. *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?*

III. What is here meant by *bringing life and immortality to light. Life and immortality* is here by a frequent Hebraism, put for *immortal life;* as also immediately before the text, you find *purpose and grace*, put for God's *gracious purpose.* The phrase of *bringing to light* is spoken of things which were before either wholly or

in a great measure hid, either were not at all discovered before, or not so clearly. Now, because the Heathens, by the light of nature, had some probable conjectures and hopes concerning another life after this, they were, in some measure, persuaded, that when men died, they were not wholly extinguished, but did pass into another world, and did there receive rewards suited to their carriage and demeanour in this life; and because the Jews also before Christ, had these natural suggestions and hopes strengthened and confirmed by revelations, which God made unto them under the Old Testament, therefore we cannot understand this phrase of Christ's *bringing immortal life to light* absolutely, as if it were wholly a new discovery, which the world had no apprehension of before; but only comparatively, as a thing which was now rendered by the coming of Christ into the world, incomparably more evident and manifest. *Quicquid enim Philosophi, quicquid Rabbini ea de re dicunt, tenebræ sunt, si ad evangelii lucem comparentur;* "Whatever the Philo-"sophers, whatever the Rabbins say of this matter, is "but darkness compared to the clear light and revelati-"on of the gospel." I proceed to the

Second thing I proposed, *viz.* To shew what Christ's coming into the world hath done towards *the abolishing of death*, and *bringing of life and immortality to light.*

I shall speak distinctly to these two.

I. What Christ's appearance and coming into the world hath done towards *the abolishing of death*, or how *death is abolished by the appearance of Christ.* I have already shewn in the explication, that this phrase, *the abolishing of death*, signifies the conquest which he made over death in his own person for himself; the fruit of which victory redounds to us. For in that Christ, by his divine power, did conquer it, and set himself free from the bands of it; this shews that the power of it is now brought into other hands, that *Christ hath the keys of hell and death;* so that though the devil, by tempting to sin, brought death into the world, yet it shall not be in his power to keep men always under the power of it: and hereby the terror of this great enemy is in a good measure taken away, and he shall at last be totally destroyed

stroyed by the same hand that hath already given him his mortal wound.

Now this is said to be done by the *appearing of Jesus Christ*, for as much as by his coming into the world, and taking our nature upon him, he became capable of encountering this enemy and overcoming him, in such a manner, as might give us assurance of a final victory over it, and for the present comfort and encourage us against the fears of it. For,

1. By taking our nature upon him, he became subject to the frailties and miseries of mortality, and liable to the suffering of death, by which expiation of sin was made. Sin was the cause of death. So the Apostle tells us, *By man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death came upon all.* Now, the way to cure this malady which was come upon our nature, and to remove this great mischief which was come into the world, is by taking away the meritorious cause of it, which is the guilt of sin. Now, this Christ hath taken away by his death. Christ, that he might abolish death, hath appeared for the abolition of sin. So the Apostle tells us, Heb. ix, 26, 27, 28. *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,* εἰς ἀθέτησιν ἁμαρτίας, *for the abolishing of sin:* And to shew that this was intended as a remedy of the great mischief and inconvenience of mortality, which sin had brought upon mankind, the Apostle immediately adds in the next verse, that *as it is appointed unto all men once to die, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;* and by this means the sting of death is taken away, and death in effect conquered; the consideration of which makes the Apostle break out into that thankful triumph, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. *O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin: But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. As Christ, by taking our nature upon him, became capable of suffering death, and thereby making expiation for sin; so by dying he became capable of rising again from the dead, whereby he hath gained a perfect victory and conquest over death and the powers of darkness. And this account the Apostle gives us of

Christ's

Christ's taking our nature upon him, as being one of the principal ends and designs of it, Heb. ii. 14, 15, 16. *For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;* that is, that by taking our nature upon him, he might be capable of encountering his enemy, that is, of encountering death in his own territories, and beating him in his own quarters; and by rising out of his grave, he might give us full and comfortable assurance of the possibility of being rescued from the power of the grave, and recovered out of the jaws of death. And therefore the wisdom of God pitched upon this way, as that which was most fit and proper to encourage and bear us up against the terrors of the enemy; and by giving us a lively instance and example of a victory over death, atchieved by one cloathed with mortality like ourselves, *we might have strong consolation and good hope through grace*, and might be fully assured, that he who hath conquered this enemy for himself, was able also to conquer him for us, and to deliver us from the grave. Therefore the Apostle reasons from the fitness and suitableness of this dispensation, as if no other argument could have been so proper to arm us against the fears of death, and to satisfy us that we should not always be held under the power of it; *For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death,* &c. The force of which argument is this, that seeing men are of a mortal nature, (for that he means by *being partakers of flesh and blood,*) nothing can be a greater comfort to us against the fears of death, than to see death conquered by flesh and blood, by one of the same nature with ourselves. Therefore the Apostle adds, ver. 16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.* If he had assumed the angelical nature, which is immortal, this would not have been so sensible a conviction to us of the possibility of it, and to have a lively instance and example pre-

presented us, of one in our nature conquering death, and triumphing over the grave. I proceed to the

II. Thing, What Christ hath done towards *the bringing of life and immortality to light.* And because I told you that this is comparatively spoken, and signifies to us a greater degree of evidence, and a firmer assurance given us by the Christian religion, than the world had before, therefore it will be requisite to enquire into these two things.

First, What assurance men had or might have had of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, before the coming of Christ into the world, and the revelation of the gospel.

Secondly, What greater evidence, and what higher degree of assurance the gospel now gives us of immortal life; what greater arguments this new revelation and discovery of God to the world doth furnish us withal, to persuade us of this matter, than the world was acquainted withal before.

First, What assurance men had or might have had of the immortality of the soul, and consequently of a future state, before the revelation of the gospel by Christ's coming into the world. And here are two things distinctly to be considered.

First, What arguments natural reason doth furnish us withal, to persuade us of this principle, that our souls are immortal, and that there is another state remains for men after this life.

Secondly, What assurance *de facto* the world had of this principle, before Christ's coming into the world: what the Heathens, and what the Jews had. The reason why I shall speak to these distinctly, is, because there are two very different enquiries; what assurance men might have had from the principles of natural reason concerning this matter, and what assurance they had *de facto*. I begin with the

First, What arguments natural reason doth furnish us withal to persuade us to this principle, that our souls are immortal, and consequently that another state remains for men after this life. And here I shall shew,

I. How much may be said for it.

II. How

II. How little can be said against it. But before I come to speak particularly to the arguments, which natural reason affords us for the proof of this principle, I shall premise certain general considerations which may give light and force to the following arguments. As,

1st, By the soul we mean a part of man distinct from his body, or a principle in him which is not matter. I chuse rather to describe it this way, than by the essential properties of it which are hard to fix upon, and are more remote from common apprehension. Our Saviour, when he would convince his disciples after his resurrection, that the body wherein he appeared to them was a real body, and that he was not a spirit or apparition, he bids them *touch and handle him; for,* (says he) *a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have.* So that by the soul or spirit of a man we mean some principle in man, which is really distinct from his visible and sensible part, from all that in man which affects our outward senses, and which is not to be described by any sensible and external qualities, such as we use to describe a body by: Because it is supposed to be of such a nature, as does not fall under the cognizance and notice of any of our senses. And therefore I describe it, by removing from it all those qualities and properties which belong to that which falls under our senses, *viz.* That it is something in man distinct from his body, a principle in him which is not matter; that principle which is the cause of those several operations, which by inward sense and experience we are conscious to ourselves of; such are perception, understanding, memory, will. So that the most plain and popular notions that we can have of the soul is, that it is something in us which we never saw, and which is the cause of those effects which we find in ourselves, it is the principle whereby we are conscious to ourselves, that we perceive such and such objects, that we see, or hear, or perceive any thing by any other sense; it is that whereby we think and remember, whereby we reason about any thing, and do freely chuse and refuse such things as are presented us. These operations every one is conscious to himself of, and that which is the principle of these, or the cause from whence these proceed, is that which we mean by the soul.

2dly, By

2*dly*, By the immortality of the soul, I mean nothing else, but that it survives the body, that when the body dies and falls to the ground, yet this principle which we call the soul, still remains and lives separate from it; that is, there is still a part of us which is free from the fate of the body, and continues to perform all those operations, to the performance of which the organs of the body are not necessary; that is, when our bodies are destitute of life, and become a dead carcase, there is still something that did belong to us, which retains the power of understanding, which thinks, and reasons, and remembers, and does all these freely.

3*dly*, That he that goes about to prove the soul's immortality, supposeth the existence of a deity, that there is a God: For altho' there be a very intimate and strict connection between these two principles as to us, as being the two great pillars of all religion; yet that which is first and most fundamental to all religion, is the existence of a God, which if it be not first proved, the best arguments for the soul's immortality lose their force. Therefore, as to the present argument, I suppose the being of God as a thing acknowledged, and not now to be proved; which I may the better do, having formerly endeavoured to make good this grand principle of religion, against the pretensions of the Atheists.

4*thly*, The existence of a God being supposed, this doth very much facilitate the other, of the soul's immortality. For this being an essential property of the divine nature, that he is a spirit, that is, something that is not matter, it being once granted that God is, thus much is gained, that there is such a thing as a spirit, as an immaterial substance, that is not liable to die or perish; so that he that goes about to prove the immortality of the soul, shall not need to prove that there may be such a thing as a spirit, that the notion of an immaterial substance does not imply a contradiction; because, supposing that there is a God, who is essentially a spirit, there can be no doubt of the possibility of such a thing as a spirit: and though there be this difference between God and all other spirits, that he is an infinite spirit, whereas others are but finite; yet no man that

grants

grants the existence of an infinite spirit, can with any pretence or colour of reason deny the possibility of a finite spirit.

5thly and *lastly*, It is highly reasonable, that men should acquiesce and rest satisfied in such reasons and arguments for the proof of any thing, as the nature of the thing to be proved will bear; because there are several kinds and degrees of evidence, which all things are not equally capable of It is sufficient that the evidence be such as the nature of the thing to be proved, will admit of, and such as prudent men make no scruple to admit for sufficient evidence for things of the like nature, and such as, supposing the thing to be, we cannot ordinarily expect better, or greater evidence for it.

There are two kinds of evidences, which are the highest and most satisfactory that this world affords to us; and those are the evidence of sense, and mathematical demonstration. Now there are many things, concerning which the generality of men profess themselves to be well satisfied, which do not afford either of these kinds of evidence. There is none of us but doth firmly believe that we were born, though we do not remember any such thing; no man's memory does furnish him with the testimony of his senses for this matter, nor can any man prove this by a mathematical demonstration, nor by any necessary argument, so as to shew it impossible that the thing should be otherwise. For it is possible that a man may come into the world otherwise, than by the ordinary course of generation, as the first man did who was created immediately by God; and yet I know no man in the world who doubts in the least concerning this matter, though he hath no other argument for it, but the testimony of others, and his own observation, how other persons like himself came into the world. And it is reasonable to acquiesce in this evidence, because the nature of the thing affords no greater. We who never were at Jerusalem, do firmly believe that there is such a place, upon the testimony and relation of others: And no man is blamed for this, as being over-credulous; because no man that will not take the pains to go thither, can have any other greater evidence

dence of it, than the general testimony of those who say they have seen it. And indeed almost all human affairs, I am sure the most important, are governed and conducted by such evidence, as falls very much short both of the evidence of sense, and of mathematical demonstration.

To apply this then to my present purpose. That the soul of man is of an immortal nature, is not capable of all kinds and degrees of evidence. It cannot be proved by our senses, nor is it reasonable to expect it should be so proved; because the soul is supposed, by every one that discourseth of it, to be a thing of such a nature, as cannot be seen or handled, or fall under any other of our senses: nor can it be proved to us by our own experience, while we are in this world; because whoever dies, which is the only trial that can be made whether our souls remain after our bodies, goes out of this world. As for mathematical demonstration, the nature of the thing renders it incapable of it. It remains then, that we rest contented with such arguments as the nature of the thing will bear, and with such evidence as men are contented to accept of, and do account sufficient in other matters; such evidence as a prudent considering man, who is not credulous on the one hand, and on the other is not prejudiced by any interest against it, would rest satisfied in.

Having premised these general considerations, to clear my way, I now come to speak to the particular arguments, whereby the immortality of the soul may be made out to our reason. And the best way to estimate the force of the arguments which I shall bring for it, will be to consider before hand with ourselves, what evidence we can in reason expect for a thing of this nature. Suppose our souls be immortal; by what kind of arguments could we desire to be assured of it? Setting aside miracles and divine revelation, could we desire more than this?

I. That the thing be a natural notion and dictate of our minds.

II. That it doth not contradict any other principle that nature hath planted in us, but does very well ac-

cord and agree with all other the moſt natural notions of our minds.

III. That it may be ſuitable to our natural fears and hopes.

IV. That it tends to the happineſs of man, and the good order and government of the world.

V. That it gives the moſt rational account of all thoſe inward actions, which we are conſcious to ourſelves of, as perception, underſtanding, memory, will, which we cannot without great unreaſonableneſs aſcribe to matter, as the cauſe of them. If all theſe be thus, as I ſhall endeavour to make it appear they are, what greater ſatisfaction could we deſire to have of the immortality of our ſouls, than theſe arguments give us? I do not ſay that any one of theſe arguments doth ſufficiently conclude this thing; nor is it neceſſary, that taken ſingly and by themſelves they ſhould do it; it is ſufficient that they concur to make up one entire argument, which may be a ſufficient evidence of the ſoul's immortality. To illuſtrate this by an inſtance: Suppoſe a man ſhould uſe theſe two arguments to prove, that ſuch a man deſerves to be credited in ſuch a relation, *1ſt*, Becauſe he had ſufficient knowledge of the thing he relates; and, *2dly*, Becauſe he is a man of integrity and fidelity. Neither of theſe alone would prove the man to be worthy of credit, tho' both together make up a good argument. So it is in theſe arguments which I have produced; it may be, no one of them is a ſufficient inducement, taken ſingly and by itſelf, to ſatisfy a man fully that the ſoul is immortal; and yet they may concur together to make a very powerful argument. I begin with the

I. That our ſouls are of an immortal nature, that they do not die and periſh with our bodies, but paſs into another ſtate upon the diſſolution of our bodies, is a natural notion and dictate of our minds. That I call a natural notion, which the minds of all men do naturally hit upon and agree in, notwithſtanding the diſtance and remoteneſs of the ſeveral parts of the world from one another, notwithſtanding the different tempers, and manner and ways of education. The only way to meaſure whether any thing be natural or not, is by enquiring whether

whether it agree to the whole kind or not; if it do, then we call it natural. *Omnium consensus naturæ vox est,* "The consent of all is the voice of nature," says Tully, speaking of the universal agreement of all nations in this apprehension, that "the souls of men remain after their bodies." And this he tells us he looks upon as a very great argument, *Maximum verè argumentum est, naturam ipsam de immortalitate animarum tacitam judicare, quod omnibus curæ sint, & maxime quidem, quæ post mortem futura sunt:* "This is a very great "argument that nature doth secretly, and in men's silent thoughts, determine the immortality of the soul, "that all men are solicitous of what shall become of "them after death." *Nescio quomodo inhæret in mentibus quasi seculorum quoddam augurium futurorum, idque in maximis ingeniis altissimisque animis & existit maxime & apparet facillime:* "I know not how, saith he, there "sticks in the mind a certain kind of presage of a future "state, and this is most deeply fixed and discovers itself "soonest in the choicest spirits." Again the same author, *Ut deos esse natura opinamur, sic permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium:* "As this opinion "is planted in us by nature, that there is a God, so by "the consent of all nations we believe that the souls remain after the body." I might multiply testimonies to this purpose out of the antient Heathen writers: but these which I have produced out of this great author, are so plain and express, that I need bring no other.

As for those barbarous nations which have been discovered in these latter ages of the world, and which before the first planting of America, were never known to have held correspondence with these parts of the world, yet all those nations agree in this principle, of the immortality of the soul; nay, even the most barbarous of those nations, those who are most inhuman, and eat one another, those of Joupinamboult in Brazil, who are said by some authors, but I think not upon sufficient grounds, not to acknowledge the being of a God; yet even these as Lerius tells us, who lived among them, had a very fixed and firm persuasion of this principle of religion, the immortality of the soul. "There is not, says he, any

" nation in the world more remote from all religion than " these were; yet, to shew that there is some light in the " midst of this darkness, I can, says he, truly affirm, " that they have not only some apprehensions of the im- " mortality of the soul, but a most confident persuasion " of it. Their opinion, says he, is, that the souls of " stout and valiant men, after death, fly beyond the " highest mountains, and there are gathered to their " fathers and grandfathers, and live in pleasant gardens, " with all manner of delights; but the souls of slothful " and unactive men, and those who do nothing for their " country, are carried to Aygman, so they call the De- " vil, and live with him in perpetual torments." The like, Xaverius and others, who laboured in the conversion of the remote parts of the East-Indies, tell us concerning those nations, that they found them generally possessed with this principle, of the soul's immortality.

Now what will we call a natural notion, if not that which mankind in all places of the world, in all ages, so far as history informs, did universally agree in? What evidence greater than this can any man give, to shew that any thing is natural? And if we believe a God, which I told you I do all along in this argument suppose to be already proved, can we imagine that this wise and good God would plant such a notion and apprehension in the understandings of men, as would put an universal cheat and delusion upon human nature?

And that the universal consent of all nations in this principle, cannot be resolved either into the fears and groundless jealousy and superstition of human nature, nor into universal tradition, which had its original from some impostor, nor into reason and policy of state, I might shew particularly: but having formerly done that, concerning the universal consent of all nations in the belief of a God, and the reason being the very same, as to this principle of the immortality of the soul, I shall not need to do this over again upon this argument.

And that some persons, and particular sects in the world, have disowned this principle, is no sufficient objection against it. It cannot be denied, but the Epicureans among the philosophers did renounce this principle;

ciple; and some also among the Stoicks do speak doubtfully of it. The Sadducees likewise among the Jews fell into this error, upon a mistake and misapprehension of the doctrine of their master Sadoc, who, as Josephus tells us, did use to inculcate this principle to his scholars, that though there were no rewards nor punishments after this life, yet men ought to be good and live virtuously; from whence in process of time, by heat of opposition against the Pharisees, who brought in oral tradition, and made it equal with the written word of God, they fell into that error, and denied the soul's immortality, not finding such clear texts for it in the Old Testament, as to them did seem fully convincing of this truth. Xaverius likewise tells us, that among the several sects of religion which he found in Japan, there was one which denied the immortality of the soul, and that there were any spirits: But he says they were a sort of notoriously wicked and vicious persons.

To these instances which are so few, and bear no proportion to the generality of mankind, I have these two things to say.

1. That no argument can be drawn *à monstro ad naturam.* A thing may be natural, and yet some instances may be brought to the contrary: But these are but few in comparison, and like monsters, which are no argument against nature. No man will deny that it is natural for men to have two eyes, and five fingers upon a hand; though there are several instances of men born but with one eye, and with four or six fingers.

2. But especially in matters of religion and discourse, which are subject to liberty, men may offer violence to nature, and to gratify their lusts and interests, may, by false reasonings, debauch their understanding, and by long striving against the natural bent and bias of it, may alter their apprehensions of things, and persuade others to the same: but nothing that is against nature can prevail very far, but nature will still be endeavouring to recover itself, and to free itself from the violence which is offered to it. So that mens understandings left to themselves, and not having some false bias put upon them, out of a design of pride and singularity in opinion, which was the case of Epicurus, or out of the interest of some lust,

and a design to set men at liberty to sin, which is the case of most who have renounced this principle; I say, nothing, but one of these two can ordinarily make men deny the immortality of the soul. Thus I have done with the first argument, namely, that the immortality of the soul is a natural notion and dictate of our minds.

SERMON CLXXV.

Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 Tim. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

The second Sermon on this Text.

I Proceed to the second argument, that this notion or principle of the immortality of the soul, doth not contradict any other principle that nature hath planted in us, but doth very well accord and agree with all those other notions which are most natural. I shall mention two, which seem to be the most natural notions that we have, and the most deeply rooted in our natures; the one is the existence and the perfections of God; and the other the difference of good and evil. Mankind do universally agree in these two principles, that there is a God who is essentially good and just; and that there is a real difference between good and evil, which is not founded in the opinion and imagination of persons, or in the custom and usage of the world, but in the nature of things. Now this principle of the immortality of the soul, and future rewards after this life, is so far from clashing with either of these principles, that the contrary assertion, *viz.* that our souls are mortal, and that there is nothing to be hoped for, or feared beyond this life, would very much contradict

contradict those other principles. To shew this then particularly:

1. The immortality of the soul is very agreeable to the natural notion which we have of God, one part whereof is, that he is essentially good and just.

1*st*, For his goodness. It is very agreeable to that, to think that God would make some creatures for as long a duration as they are capable of. The wisdom of God hath chosen to display itself, in creating variety of things of different degrees and perfections; things devoid of life and sense; and several degrees and orders of sensitive creatures of different shapes and figures, of different magnitude, some vastly great, others extremely little, others of middle sort between these. And himself being a pure spirit, we have no reason to doubt, but he could make creatures of a spiritual nature, and such as should have no principle of self-corruption in them. And seeing he could make creatures of such perfection, if we believe him to be essentially good, we have no reason to doubt, but that he hath done so. For it is the very nature of goodness, to communicate and diffuse itself, and to delight in doing so; and we cannot imagine but that the same goodness which prompted and inclined him to give being to those creatures which are of an inferior degree of perfection, would move him likewise to make creatures more perfect and capable of greater degrees of happiness, and of a longer enjoyment of it, if it were in his power to make such; and no man that believes the omnipotency of God can doubt of this. For he, who by a pure act of his will, can command things to be, and in an instant to start out of nothing, can as easily make one sort of creatures as another. Now the power of God being supposed, his goodness secures us of his will: For we cannot imagine any such thing as envy in a being which we suppose to be perfectly good; nothing being more inconsistent with perfect goodness, than to be unwilling to communicate happiness to others, and to grudge that others should partake of it.

Now, this being supposed, that God could and would make creatures of a spiritual and immortal nature, and the utmost imaginable perfections of such

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creatures being knowledge and liberty, wherever these perfections are found, we have reason to conclude that creature to be endowed with a principle that is of a spiritual and immortal nature. Now, these perfections of understanding and will being found in man, this argues him to be endowed with such a principle, as is in its own nature capable of an immortal duration.

It is true indeed, this spiritual part of man, which we call his soul, is united to a visible and material part, *viz.* his body; the union of which parts constitutes a peculiar sort of creature, which is *utriusque mundi nexus*, "unites "the material and immaterial world, the world of mat-"ter and of spirits." And as it is very suitable to the wisdom of God, which delights in variety, that there should be a sort of creatures compounded of both these principles, matter and spirit; so it is very agreeable to his goodness to think that he would design such creatures for as long a duration and continuance as they were capable of. For, as it is the effect of goodness to bring creatures forth into the possession of that life and happiness which they are capable of, so to continue them in the enjoyment of it for so long as they are capable.

The sum of all this is, that as it is agreeable to the wisdom of God, which made the world to display itself in all variety of creatures, so it is agreeable to his goodness, to make some of as perfect a kind as creatures are capable of being. Now, it being no repugnancy nor contradiction, that a creature should be of a spiritual and immortal nature, we have no reason to think, but that the fruitfulness of the divine goodness hath brought forth such creatures; and if there be reason to conclude any thing to be of a spiritual and immortal nature, certainly the principle of understanding and liberty, which we are conscious of in ourselves, deserves to be reputed such.

2*dly*, It is very agreeable to the justice of God, to think the souls of men remain after this life, that there may be a state of reward and recompence in another world. If we believe God to be holy and just, we cannot but believe that he loves righteousness and goodness, and hates iniquity; and that as he is Governor and

and publick magistrate of the world, he is concerned to countenance and encourage the one, and to discountenance and discourage the other. Now, the providences of God being in a great measure promiscuously administered in this world, so that no man can make any certain judgment of God's love and hatred towards persons by what befals them in this world, it being the lot of good men many times to suffer and be afflicted, and of wicked men to live in a flourishing and prosperous condition; I say, things being thus, it is very agreeable to these notions which we have of the divine holiness and justice, to believe that there will a time come, when this wise and just Governor of the world will make a wide and visible difference between the righteous and the wicked; so that though, for a while, the justice of God may be clouded, yet there will a time come when it shall be clearly manifested, and every eye see it, and bear witness to it; when *judgment shall break forth as the light, and righteousness as the noon-day.* It is possible that sin, for a while, may go unpunished, nay, triumph and prosper; and that virtue and innocence may not only be unrewarded but oppressed, and despised, and persecuted. And this may be reconcileable enough to the wisdom of God's providence, and the justice of it, supposing the immortality of the soul, and another state after this life, wherein all things shall be set strait, and every man shall receive according to his works; but unless this be supposed, it is impossible to solve the justice of God's providence. Who will believe that the affairs of the world are administred by him who loves righteousness, and hates all the workers of iniquity, who will not let the least service that is done to him pass unrewarded, nor on the other hand acquit the guilty, and let sin go unpunished, which are the properties of justice; I say, who will believe this, that looks into the course of the world, and sees with how little difference and distinction of good and bad, the affairs of it are managed? that sees virtue discountenanced and despised, poor and destitute, afflicted and tormented; when wickedness is many times exalted to high places, and makes a great noise and ruffle in the world? He that considers what a hazard many times good men run, how,

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for goodness sake, they venture, and many times quit all the contentments and enjoyments of this life, and submit to the greatest sufferings and calamities that human nature is capable of; while, in the mean time, prosperity is poured into the lap of the wicked, and heaven seems to look pleasantly upon those who deal treacherously, and to be silent while the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than himself; he that considers this, and can, without supposing another life after this, pretend to vindicate the justice of these things, must be as blind as the fortune that governs them. Would not this be a perpetual stain and blemish upon the divine providence, that Abel who offered up *a better sacrifice than Cain*, and *had this testimony, that he pleased God;* yet after all this, should have no other reward for it, but to be slain by his brother, who had offended God by a slight and contemptuous offering? If there were no reward to be expected after this life, would not this have been a sad example to the world, to see one of the first men that served God acceptably thus rewarded? What a pitiful encouragement would it be to men to be good, to see profane Esau blest *with the dew of heaven, and fatness of the earth;* and to hear good old Jacob in the end and conclusion of his days, to complain, *few and evil have the days of my pilgrimage been;* If this had been the end of Esau and Jacob, it would puzzle all the wit and reason of mankind to wipe off this reproach from the providence of God, and vindicate the justice of it. And therefore I do not wonder that the greatest wits among the Heathen Philosophers, were so much puzzled with this objection against the providence of God; if the wise, and just, and good God do administer the affairs of the world, and be concerned in the good or bad actions of men, *cur bonis male, & malis bene?* "How comes it to pass, that good "men many times are miserable, and bad men so hap- "py in the world?" And they had no other way to wipe off this objection, but by referring these things to another world, wherein the temporal sufferings of good men should be eternally rewarded, and the short and transient happiness of wicked men should be rendered insignificant and drowned in an eternity of misery.

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So that if we believe the being of God, and the providence of God (which I do all along take for granted in this argument;) there is no other way imaginable to solve the equity and justice of God's providence, but upon this supposition, that there is another life after this. For to say, that virtue is a sufficient and abundant reward for itself, though it have some truth in it, if we set aside those sufferings, and miseries, and calamities, which virtue is frequently attended with in this life; yet if these be taken in, it is but a very jejune and dry speculation. For considering the strong propension and inclination of human nature to avoid these evils and inconveniencies, a state of virtue attended with great sufferings, would be so far from being a happiness, that it would be a real misery; so that the determination of the Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 19. is according to nature, and the truth and reason of things, that, *If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men most miserable.* For although it be true, that as things now stand, and as the nature of man is framed, good men do find a strange kind of inward pleasure and secret satisfaction of mind in the discharge of their duty, and doing what is virtuous; yet every man that looks into himself, and consults his own breast, will find that this delight and contentment springs chiefly from the hopes which men conceive, that a holy and virtuous life shall not be unrewarded: and without these hopes, virtue is but a dead and empty name; and notwithstanding the reasonableness of virtuous actions, compared with the contrary of them, yet when virtue came to be incumbered with difficulties, and to be attended with such sufferings and inconveniencies as were grievous and intolerable to human nature, then it would appear unreasonable to chuse that for a happiness, which would rob a man of all the felicity of his life. For, though a man were never so much in love with virtue for the native beauty and comeliness of it; yet it would strangely cool his affection to it, to consider that he should be undone by the match, that when he had it, he must go a begging with it, and be in danger of death, for the sake of that which he had chosen for

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the felicity of his life. So that how devout ſoever the woman might be, yet I dare ſay ſhe was not over-wiſe and conſiderate, who going about with a pitcher of water in one hand, and a pan of coals in the other, and being aſked what ſhe intended to do with them, anſwered: "That ſhe intended with the one to burn up heaven, "and with the other to quench hell, that men might "love God and virtue for their own ſakes, without hope "of reward or fear of puniſhment."

And the conſequence of this dry doctrine does ſufficiently appear in the ſect of the Sadducees, which had its riſe from this principle of Sadoc, the maſter of the ſect, who, out of an indiſcreet zeal to teach ſomething above others, and indeed above the pitch of human nature, inculcated this doctrine upon his ſcholars, that religion and virtue ought to be loved for themſelves, tho' there were no reward of virtue to be hoped, nor puniſhment of vice to be feared in another world; from which his diſciples inferred, that it was not neceſſary to religion to believe a future ſtate, and in proceſs of time, peremptorily maintained that there was no life after this. For they did not only deny the reſurrection of the body, but, as St. Paul tells us, they ſaid that *there was neither angels nor ſpirit;* that is, they denied that there was any thing of an immortal nature, that did remain after this life. And what the conſequence of this was, we may ſee in the character which Joſephus gives of that ſect; for he tells us, that the commonalty of the Jews were of the ſect of the Phariſees, but moſt of the great and rich men were Sadducees; which plainly ſhews that this dry ſpeculation of loving religion and virtue for themſelves, without any expectation of future rewards, did end in their giving over all ſerious purſuit of religion; and becauſe they hoped for nothing after this life, therefore, laying aſide all other conſiderations, they applied themſelves to the preſent buſineſs of this life, and graſped as much of the preſent enjoyments of its power and riches, as they could by any means attain to.

And for a further evidence of this, that it is only or principally the hopes of a future happineſs that bear

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men up in the pursuit of virtue, that give them so much comfort and satisfaction in the prosecution of it, and make men encounter the difficulties, and oppositions, and persecutions they meet withal in the ways of religion, with so much undauntedness and courage; I say, for the farther evidence of this, I shall only offer this consideration, that according to the degree of this hope and assurance of another life, mens constancy and courage in the ways of virtue and religion have been. Before Christ's coming into the world, and *the bringing of life and immortality to light by the gospel*, we do not find in all ages of the world, so many instances of patience and constant suffering for religion, as happened in the first age after Christ. God did not think fit to try the world so much in this kind, till they were furnished with a principle which would bear them up under the greatest sufferings, which was nothing else but the full assurance which the gospel gave the world of a blessed immortality after this life; the firm belief and persuasion of which, made Christians dead to the world, and all the contentments and enjoyments of it, and by raising them above all the pleasures and terrors of sense, made them to despise present things, *in hopes of eternal life, which God that could not lie had promised.* This was that which set them above the fears of death, so that they were not to be frighted out of their religion by the most exquisite torments, and all the most horrid and fearful shapes that the malice of men and devils could dress up misery and affliction in. Whereas under the old dispensation of the law, before the revelation of the gospel, when the promises of eternal life were not so clear, and mens hopes of it more weak and faint, the express encouragement to obedience was founded in the promises of temporal blessings; God herein complying with the necessity of human nature, which is not to be wrought upon to any great purpose, but by arguments of advantage.

The sum of this argument, which I have thus largely dilated upon, because I look upon it as one of the most strong and convincing of the soul's immortality, is this; that the justice of God's providence cannot sufficiently be vindicated, but upon the supposal of this principle of the soul's immortality: whereas, if this principle be admit-

ted, that men paſs out of this life into an eternal ſtate of happineſs or miſery, according as they have behaved themſelves in this world; then the account of the unequal providences of God in this world is eaſy. For if we look upon this life as a ſtate of probation, of trial to wicked men, and of exerciſe to good men, in order to a future and eternal ſtate; and if we conſider withal, how vaſt the difference is between time and eternity, it will be eaſy then to apprehend how all things may be ſet ſtrait in another world, and how the righteouſneſs of God may appear, in giving an abundant recompence to good men for all their temporal ſervice and ſufferings, which do but prepare them the more for a quicker reliſh of the glory and happineſs which is reſerved for them; and on the other hand, in puniſhing wicked men, whoſe ſhort eaſe and proſperity in this world will, by the juſt judgment of God, for their abuſe of the bleſſings of this life, ſet out their miſery and torment to the greateſt diſadvantage. For as nothing commends happineſs more than precedent ſorrow; ſo nothing makes pain and ſuffering more bitter and intolerable, than to ſtep into them out of a ſtate of eaſe and pleaſure; ſo that the pleaſures and proſperity of wicked men in this life, conſidered with the puniſhment of the next, which will follow upon them, is an addition to their miſery. This is the very ſting of the ſecond death; and in this ſenſe alſo, that of the wiſe man is true, *the eaſe of the ſimple will ſlay them, and the proſperity of theſe fools ſhall* be the great aggravation of their deſtruction.

2. Another notion which is deeply rooted in the nature of man, is, that there is a difference between good and evil, which is not founded in the imagination of perſons, or in the cuſtom and uſage of the world, but in the nature of things; that there are ſome things which have a natural evil, and turpitude, and deformity in them; for example, impiety and prophaneneſs towards God, injuſtice and unrighteouſneſs towards men, perfidiouſneſs, injury, ingratitude, theſe are things that are not only condemned by the poſitive laws and conſtitutions of particular nations and governments, but by the general verdict and ſentiments of humanity. Piety and religion towards God, juſtice and righteouſneſs, and fidelity

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and reverence of oaths, regard to a man's word and promise, and gratitude towards those who have obliged us; these and the like qualities, which we call virtues, are not only well spoken of, where they are countenanced by the authority of law, but have the tacite approbation and veneration of mankind: and any man that thinks these things are not naturally and in themselves good, but are merely arbitrary, and depend upon the pleasure of authority, and the will of those who have the power of imposing laws upon others; I say, any such person may easily be convinced of his error by putting this supposition: Suppose wickedness were established by a law, and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, falseness in a man's word and promises, were commended and rewarded; and it were made a crime for any man to be honest, to have any regard to his oath or promise, and the man that should dare to be honest or make good his word, should be severely punished, and made a publick example; I say, suppose the reverse of all that which we call virtue, were solemnly enacted by a law, and publick authority should enjoin the practice of that which we call vice; what would the consequence of this be, when the tables were thus turned; would that which we now call vice, gain the esteem and reputation of virtue; and those things which we now call virtue, grow contemptible, and become odious to human nature? If not, then there is a natural and intrinsical difference between good and evil, between virtue and vice; there is something in the nature of these things which does not depend upon arbitrary constitution. And I think nothing can be more evident, than that the authority which should attempt such an establishment, would thereby be rendered ridiculous, and all laws of such a tendency as this, would be hissed out of the world. And the reason of this is plain, because no government could subsist upon these terms: For the very forbidding men to be just and honest, the enjoining of fraud, and violence, and perjury, and breach of trust, would apparently destroy the end of government, which is to preserve men and their rights, against the encroachments and inconveniencies of these; and this end being destroyed, human

society would presently disband, and men would naturally fall into a state of war: Which plainly shews that there is a natural, and immutable, and eternal reason for that which we call goodness and virtue; and against that which we call vice and wickedness.

To come then to my purpose, it is very agreeable to this natural notion of the difference between good and evil, to believe the soul's immortality. For nothing is more reasonable to imagine, than that good and evil, as they are differenced in their nature, so they shall be in their rewards; that it shall one time or other be well to them that do well, and evil to the wicked man. Now, seeing this difference is not made in this world, but all things happen alike to all, the belief of this difference between good and evil, and the different rewards belonging to them, infers another state after this life, which is the very thing we mean by the soul's immortality, namely, that it does not die with the body, but remains after it, and passeth into a state wherein it shall receive a reward suitable to the actions of this life.

And thus I have done with the second argument for the soul's immortality, namely, that this principle doth not contradict those other principles which nature hath planted in us, but doth very well accord and agree with those natural notions which we have of the goodness of God, and of the justice of his providence, and of the real and intrinsical difference between good and evil.

III. This principle of the soul's immortality, is suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

To the natural hopes of men. Whence is it that men are so desirous to purchase a lasting fame, and to perpetuate their memory to posterity, but that they hope that there is something belonging to them, which shall survive the fate of the body, and when that lies in the silent grave, shall be sensible of the honour which is done to their memory, and shall enjoy the pleasure of the just and impartial fame, which shall speak of them to posterity without envy or flattery? And this is a thing incident to the greatest and most generous spirits; none so apt as they to feed themselves with these hopes of immortality. What was it made those great spirits among

among the Romans so freely to sacrifice their lives for the safety of their country, but an ambition that their names might live after them, and be mentioned with honour when they were dead and gone? Which ambition of theirs, had it not been grounded in the hopes of immortality, and a natural opinion of another life after this, in which they might enjoy the delight and satisfaction of the fame which they had purchased, nothing could have been more vain and unreasonable. If there were no hopes of a life beyond this, what is there in fame that should tempt any man to forego this present life, with all the contentments and enjoyments of it? what is the pleasure of being well spoken of, when a man is not? what is the happiness which men can promise to themselves, when they are out of being, when they can enjoy nothing, nor be sensible of any thing, because they are not? So that the spring of all those brave and gallant actions, which the Heathens did with the hazard of their lives, out of a desire of after fame and glory; I say, the spring of all those actions, could be no other than the hopes of another life after this, in which they made account to enjoy the pleasure of the fame, which they purchased with the expence and loss of this present life.

But this ardent desire, and impatient thirst after fame, concerns but a few of mankind in comparison. I shall therefore instance in something which is more common and general to mankind, which plainly argues this hope of immortality. What is the ground of that peace, and quiet, and satisfaction, which good men find in good and virtuous actions, but that they have a secret persuasion and comfortable hopes that they shall some time or other be rewarded? And we find that they maintain these, even when they despair of any reward in this world. Now, what do these hopes argue, but a secret belief of a future state, and another life after this, wherein men shall receive the reward of their actions, and inherit the fruit of their doings? Whence is it else, that good men, though they find that goodness suffers, and is persecuted in this world, and that the best designs are many times unsuccessful; what is it that bears them up under these disappointments, and makes them constant in a virtuous course,

but this hope of another life, in a better state of things hereafter? They have some secret presage in their own minds of a life after death, which will be a time of recompence, as this is of trial.

2. The same may be argued from the natural fears of men. Whence is the secret shame, and fear, and horror, which seizeth upon the minds of men, when they are about a wicked action; yea, though no eye see them, and though what they are doing do not fall under the cognizance of any human court or tribunal? Whence is it that they meet with such checks and rebukes in their own spirits, and feel such a disturbance and confusion in their minds, when they do a vile and unworthy thing; yea, although it be so secretly contrived and so privately managed, that no man can charge them with it, or call them to account for it? What, art thou afraid of man, if there be no life after this? Why do thy joints tremble, and thy knees knock together, if thou beest in no danger from any thing in this world, and hast no fears of the other? if men had not a natural dread of another world, and sad and dreadful presages of future vengeance, why do not men sin with assurance, when no eye sees them? Why are not men secure, when they have only imagined a mischief privately in their own hearts, and no creature is privy and conscious to it? Why do mens own consciences lash and sting them for these things, which they might do with as great impunity from men in this world, as the most virtuous actions? Whence is it that *cogitare, peccare est,* as Min. Felix expresseth it, *& non solùm conscios timet, sed & conscientiam?* Whence is it that "a "wicked man is guilty upon account merely of his "thoughts, and is not only fearful, because of those things "which others are conscious of, but because of those "things which nobody knows but his own conscience?" Whence is it that,

Scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,
Facti crimen habet?

that "he that does but imagine and devise secret mis-"chief in his heart, is guilty to himself, as if the fact "had

" had been committed? And when no man can charge and accuse him for it, yet,

Nocte dieque suum gestat in pectore testem,

" he carries his accuser in his breast, who does night and " day incessantly witness against him?"

And that these fears are natural, the sudden rise of them is a good evidence. They do not proceed from deliberation, men do not reason themselves into these fears, but they spring up in mens minds they know not how; which shews that they are natural. Now a man's natural actions, I mean, such as surprize us, and do not proceed from deliberation, are better arguments of the intimate sense of our minds, and do more truly discover the bottom of our hearts, and those notions that are implanted in our natures, than those actions which are governed by reason and discourse, and proceed from deliberation. To demonstrate this by an instance; if a man, upon a sudden sight of a snake, do recoil and start back, tremble and grow pale; this is a better argument of a natural antipathy and fear, than it is of a natural courage, if afterward, when he hath commanded down his fear, he should, by his reason persuade himself to take up the snake into his hand. If you would know what a man's natural apprehensions are, take him on the sudden, and give him no time to deliberate. Therefore some cunning politicians have used this way of surprize and sudden questions, to dive into the hearts of men, and discover their secrets.

In like manner, if you would know what mens natural apprehensions are concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state, observe what men's first thoughts are, whether a man's conscience does not suggest to him such fears upon the commission of sin. There is no doubt but men may offer violence to their natures, and reason themselves into great doubts about the soul's immortality; nay, men may be bribed into the contrary opinion: but this man who in his deliberate discourses denies any rewards after this life, shall by his natural actions acknowledge them, by those fears and terrors, which his guilty conscience is ever and anon surprised withal.

The

The sum of this argument is, that it is natural for men that live piously and virtuously, that do just, and honest, and worthy actions, to conceive good hopes that it shall some time or other be well with them; that however they may meet with no reward and recompence in this world, yet *verily there will be a reward for the righteous*: and on the other hand, wicked men, though they flourish and prosper in their wickedness, yet they are not free from guilt, they are fearful and timorous, even when their condition sets them above the fear of any man upon earth. Now what does this signify, but that they have some secret presages of an after-punishment? Nature suggests this thought to them, that there will be a time when all the sins which they have committed, and the wickedness which they have done, shall be accounted for.

And it is no prejudice to this truth, that some men sin against their consciences, and by frequent acts of sin, and offering notorious violence to their own light, bring themselves into a brawny and insensible condition, so that they have not those stings and lashes, are not haunted with those fears and terrors which pursue common sinners. This is but reasonable to be expected, that men by frequent acts of sin, should lose the tender sense which mens consciences naturally have of good and evil; that men that lay waste their consciences by gross and notorious sins, should lose the sense of good and evil, and that their consciences should grow hard like a beaten road; nay, it is suitable to the justice of God, to give up such persons to a reprobate sense, to an injudicious mind, that they who would not be awakened and reclaimed by the natural fear of divine justice, which God hath hid in every man's conscience, should at last lose all sense and apprehension of these things, and be permitted securely, and without remorse, to perfect their own ruin.

IV. This doctrine of the immortality of the soul, does evidently tend to the happiness and perfection of man, and to the good order and government of the world; to the happiness and perfection of man, both considered singly, and in society.

1. To-

1. To the happiness and perfection of man, considered in his single capacity. If it be a thing desirable to be at all, then it is a thing desirable to be continued in being as long as may be, and for ever if it be possible. If life be a perfection, then eternal life is much more so; especially if the circumstance of this present life be considered, together with the state which we hope for hereafter. The condition of men, in this present life, is attended with so many frailties, liable to so great miseries and sufferings, to so many pains and diseases, to such various causes of sorrow and trouble, of fear and vexation, by reason of the many hazards and uncertainties, which not only the comforts and contentments of our lives, but even life itself is liable to, that the pleasure and happiness of it is by these very much rebated; so that were not men trained on with the hopes of something better hereafter, life itself would to many men be an insupportable burden: If men were not supported and born up under the anxieties of this present life, with the hopes and expectations of a happier state in another world, mankind would be the most imperfect and unhappy part of God's creation. For although other creatures be subjected to a great deal of vanity and misery, yet they have this happiness, that as they are made for a short duration and continuance, so they are only affected with the present, they do not fret and discontent themselves about the future, they are not liable to be cheated with hopes, nor tormented with fears, nor vexed at disappointments, as the sons of men are.

But if our souls be immortal, this makes abundant amends and compensation for the frailties of this life, and all the transitory sufferings and inconveniencies of this present state; human nature, considered with this advantage, is infinitely above *the brute beasts that perish.*

As for those torments and miseries which we are liable to in another world, far greater than any thing that men suffer in this life, this ought not in reason to be objected against the immortality of the soul, as if this doctrine did not tend to the happiness and perfection of man: For if this be truly the case of mankind, that God hath made mens souls of an immortal nature, and designed them

them for a perpetual duration and continuance in another state after this life, in order to which state he hath placed every man in this world, to be it as were, a candidate for eternity, he hath furnished every man with such helps and advantages, such opportunities and means for the attaining of everlasting happiness, that if he be not grosly wanting to himself, he shall not miscarry; if this be the case, then an immortal nature is a real and mighty privilege. If God puts every man into a capacity of happiness, and if no man becomes miserable but by his own choice, if no man falls short of eternal happiness but by his own fault, then immortality is a privilege in itself, and a curse to none but those who make it so to themselves.

2. This doctrine tends to the happiness of man, considered in society, to the good order and government of the world. I do not deny, but if this principle of the immortality of the soul were not believed in the world, if the generality of mankind had no regard to any thing beyond this present life: I say, I do not deny, notwithstanding this, but there would be some kind of government kept up in the world; the necessities of human nature, and the mischiefs of contention would compel men to some kind of order: But I say withal, that if this principle were banished out of the world, government would want its most firm basis and foundation; there would be infinitely more disorders in the world, were men not restrained from injustice and violence by principles of conscience, and the awe of another world. And that this is so, is evident from hence, that all magistrates think themselves concerned to cherish religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God, and of a future state.

This is the fourth argument, that this doctrine does evidently tend to the happiness of man, and the good order and government of the world. I grant, that this argument alone, and taken singly by itself, is far from enforcing and necessarily concluding the soul's immortality; but if the other arguments be of force to conclude, this added to them is a very proper inducement to persuade and incline men to the belief of this principle; it does very well serve the purpose for which I bring it, namely,

namely, to shew that if there be good arguments for it, no man hath reason to be averse or backward to the belief of it; if by other arguments we be convinced of the suitableness of this principle to reason, this consideration will satisfy us, that it is not against our interest to entertain it. And no man that is not resolved to live wickedly, hath reason to desire that the contrary should be true. For what would a man gain by it, if the soul were not immortal, but to level himself with *the beasts that perish*, and to put himself into a worse and more miserable condition than any of the creatures below him?

SERMON CLXXVI.

Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 Tim. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

The third Sermon on this Text.

THE fifth and last argument is, that this supposition of the soul's immortality, gives the fairest account and easiest solution of the phænomena of human nature, of those several actions and operations which we are conscious to ourselves of, and which, without great violence to our reason, cannot be resolved into a bodily principle, and ascribed to mere matter; such are perception, memory, liberty, and the several acts of understanding and reason. These operations we find in ourselves, and we cannot imagine how they should be performed by mere matter; therefore we ought in all reason to resolve them into some principle of another nature from matter; that is, into something that is immaterial,

terial, and conſequently immortal, that is, incapable in its own nature of corruption and diſſolution.

And that the force of this argument may the better appear, I ſhall ſpeak ſomething of theſe diſtinctly, and ſhew that none of theſe operations can be performed from mere matter. I begin with the

1. And loweſt, which is ſenſitive perception, which is nothing elſe but a conſciouſneſs to ourſelves of our own ſenſations, an apprehenſion of the impreſſions which are made upon us; and this faculty is that which conſtitutes the difference between ſenſitive and inſenſitive creatures. A ſtone may have ſeveral impreſſions made upon it, as well as the living creature endued with ſenſe; but with this difference, that whatever impreſſions are made upon a ſtone, by knocking, cutting, or any other kind of motion or action, the ſtone is ſtupid, and is not in the leaſt conſcious of any of thoſe impreſſions, does not perceive what is done to it; whereas thoſe creatures which are endued with ſenſe, do plainly perceive their own and other motions, they are affected with the impreſſions which are made upon them.

Now, we can give no account of this operation from mere matter. It is plain, that matter is not in its own nature ſenſible: for we find the greateſt part of the world to conſiſt of inſenſible parts, and ſuch as have no perception. Now, if matter be granted in itſelf to be inſenſible, it is utterly unimaginable, how any motion or configuration of the parts of it, ſhould raiſe that which hath no ſenſe to a faculty of perception. Epicurus fancied thoſe particles of matter, of which ſouls were framed, to be the fineſt and ſmalleſt; and, for their ſmoother and eaſier motion, that they were all of a round figure. But ſuppoſing matter not to be naturally and of itſelf ſenſible, who can conceive what that is which ſhould awaken the drowſy parts of it, to a lively ſenſe of the impreſſions made upon it? It is every whit as eaſy to imagine how an inſtrument might be framed and turned ſo artificially, as to hear its own ſounds, and to be marvellouſly delighted with them; or that a glaſs might be poliſhed to that fineneſs, as to ſee all thoſe objects which are reflected upon it.

But

But there is one difficulty in this: for it may be said, if sensitive perception be an argument of the soul's immateriality, and consequently immortality, then the souls of beasts will be immortal, as well as the souls of men. For answer to this, I shall say these things.

1st, That the most general and common philosophy of the world hath always acknowledged something in beasts besides their bodies, and that the faculty of sense and perception which is in them, is founded in a principle of a higher nature than matter. And as this was always the common philosophy of the world, so we find it to be a supposition of scripture, which frequently attributes souls to beasts as well as to men, though of a much inferior nature. And therefore those particular philosophers, who have denied any immaterial principle, or a soul to beasts, have also denied them to have sense, any more than a clock, or watch, or any other engine; and have imagined them to be nothing else but a finer and more complicated kind of engines, which by reason of the curiosity and tenderness of their frame, are more easily susceptible of all kind of motions and impressions from without, which impressions are the cause of all those actions that resemble those sensations which we men find in ourselves: Which is to say, that birds, and beasts, and fishes, are nothing else but a more curious sort of puppets, which by certain secret and hidden weights and springs do move up and down, and counterfeit the actions of life and sense. This, I confess, seems to me to be an odd kind of philosophy; and it hath this vehement prejudice against it, that if this were true, every man would have great cause to question the reality of his own perceptions; for, to all appearance, the sensations of beasts are as real as ours, and in many things their senses much more exquisite than ours; and if nothing can be a sufficient argument to a man, that he is really endowed with sense, besides his own consciousness of it, then every man hath reason to doubt whether all men in the world besides himself be not mere engines; for no man hath any other evidence, that another man is really endowed with sense, than he hath that brute creatures are so; for they appear to us to see, and hear,

and feel, and smell, and taste things as truly, and as exactly as any man in the world does.

2dly, Supposing beasts to have an immaterial principle distinct from their body, it will not from hence follow, that they are immortal, in the sense that we attribute immortality to men. For immortality, when we ascribe it to men, signifies two things.

1. That the soul remains after the body, and is not corrupted and dissolved together with it.

2. That it lives in this separate state, and is sensible of happiness or misery.

(1.) Immortality imports that the soul remains after the body, and is not corrupted or dissolved together with it. And there is no inconvenience in attributing this sort of immortality to the brute creatures. And here it is not necessary for us, who know so little of the ways and works of God, and of the secrets of nature, to be able to give a particular account what becomes of the souls of brute creatures after death; whether they return into the soul and spirit of the world, if there be any such thing, as some fancy; or whether they pass into the bodies of other animals which succeed in their rooms: I say, this is not necessary to be particularly determined; it is sufficient to lay down this in general as highly probable, that they are such a sort of spirits, which, as to their operation and life, do necessarily depend upon matter, and require union with it; which union being dissolved, they lapse into an insensible condition, and a state of inactivity. For being endowed only with a sensitive principle, the operations of which do plainly depend upon an organical disposition of the body, when the body is dissolved, all their activity ceaseth; and when this visible frame of the world shall be dissolved, and this scene of sensible things shall pass away, then it is not improbable that they shall be discharged out of being, and return to their first nothing: for though in their own nature they would continue longer, yet having served the end of their being, and done their work, it is not unsuitable to the same wisdom that made them, and commanded them into being, to let them sink into their first state.

(2.) Im-

(2.) Immortality, as applied to the spirits of men, imports that their souls are not only capable of continuing, but living in this separate state, so as to be sensible of happiness and misery. For the soul of man being of an higher nature, and not only endowed with a faculty of sense, but likewise other faculties which have no necessary dependence upon, or connexion with matter, having a sense of God, and of divine and spiritual things, and being capable of happiness in the enjoyment of God, or of misery in a separation from him; it is but reasonable to imagine, that the souls of men should be admitted to the exercise of these faculties, and the enjoyment of that life which they are capable of in a separate state. And this is that which constitutes that vast and wide difference between the souls of men and beasts: And this degree of immortality is as much above the other, as reason and religion are above sense.

2. Another faculty in us, which argues an immaterial, and consequently an immortal principle in man, is memory; and this likewise is common in some degree to several of the brute creatures, and it seems to be nothing else but a kind of continued sensation of things. And of this we can give no account from mere matter. For if that which we call the soul, were nothing else but, as Epicurus imagined, a little wild-fire, a company of small round particles of matter in perpetual motion, it being a fluid thing, it would be liable to a continual dissipation of its parts, and the new parts that come, would be altogether strangers to the impressions made upon the old: So that supposing the soul liable but to those changes which the grosser parts of our bodies, our flesh and blood, continually are liable to, by the evaporation and spending of the old, and an accession of new matter; (and if we suppose the soul to be fluid matter, that is, consisting of particles, which are by no kind of connexion linked to one another, it will in all probability be more easily dissipable than the grosser parts of the body;) and if so, how is it imaginable that these new and foreign particles should retain any sense of the impressions made upon those which are gone many years ago?

3. Another faculty which I ſhall inſtance in, is the will of man, which is endowed with liberty and freedom, and gives a man dominion over his own actions. Matter moves by neceſſary and certain laws, and cannot move if it be at reſt, unleſs it be moved by another; and cannot reſt, that is, can not but move, if it be impelled by another. Whence then are voluntary motions? Whence is the *αὐτεξούσιον*, the arbitrary principle which we find in ourſelves, the freedom of action to do or not to do this or that, which we are intimately conſcious to ourſelves of? Of all the operations of our minds, it is the hardeſt to give an account of liberty from mere matter. This Epicurus was ſenſible of, and infinitely puzzled with it, as we may ſee by the queſtion which Lucretius puts, *Unde eſt hæc, inquam, fatis avulſa voluntas?* "How comes the ſoul of man to have this peculiar pri-"vilege of freedom and liberty, above all other ſorts "of matter that are in the world? Whence is it, that "when all things elſe move by a fatal neceſſity, the ſoul "of man ſhould be exempted from that ſlavery?" He does indeed attempt to give an account of it from a *motion of declination* which is proper and peculiar to the particles of the ſoul: But that is a more unintelligible riddle than liberty itſelf. The

4. And laſt operation I ſhall inſtance in, is that of reaſon and underſtanding. Not to mention the activity and nimbleneſs of our thoughts, in the abſtracted notions of our minds, the multitude of diſtinct ideas and notions which dwell together in our ſouls, none of which are accountable from matter; I ſhall only inſtance in two particulars.

1. Thoſe acts of reaſon and judgment, whereby we over-rule the reports of our ſenſes, and correct the errors and deceptions of them.

2. The contemplation of ſpiritual and divine things.

1ſt, Thoſe acts of reaſon and judgment whereby we over-rule the reports and determinations of ſenſe. Our ſenſe tells us, that things at a diſtance are leſs, than our reaſon tells us they are really in themſelves; as that the body of the ſun is but about a foot diameter: but our reaſon informs us otherwiſe. Now what is the principle that controuls our ſenſes, and corrects the deception of them?

them? If the soul of man be mere matter, it can only judge of things according to the impressions which are made upon our senses: But we do judge otherwise, and see reason to do so many times. Therefore it must be some higher principle which judges of things, not by the material impressions which they make upon our senses, but by other measures. And therefore to avoid this inconvenience, Epicurus was glad to fly the absurdity, to affirm that all things really are what they appear to us, and that in truth the sun is no bigger than it seems to be.

2*dly*, The contemplation of things spiritual and divine, is an argument that the soul is of a higher original than any thing that is material. To contemplate the nature of God, and the divine excellencies and perfections; the meditation of a future state, and of the happiness of another world; those breathings which good men feel in their souls after God, and the enjoyment of him, argue the spiritual nature of the soul. *Hoc habet argumentum divinitatis suæ*, saith Seneca, *quod eam divina delectant, nec ut alienis interest sed ut suis.* "The "soul of man hath this argument of its divine original, "that it is so strangely delighted, so infinitely pleased "and satisfied with the contemplation of divine things, "and is taken up with these thoughts, as if they were "its proper business and concernment." Those strong inclinations and desires after immortality, and the pleasure which good men find in the fore-thoughts of the happiness which they hope to enter into, when their souls shall quit these mansions; the restless aspirings of our souls towards God, and those blessed mansions where he dwells, and where the spirits of good men converse with him and one another; these signify our souls to be of a nobler extraction than the earth, that they are descended from above, and that heaven is their country, their thoughts are so much upon it, and they are so desirous to return to it.

I shall conclude this argument from the noble and excellent operations of our souls, of which we are conscious to ourselves, with a passage of Tully to this purpose. *Animarum nulla in terris origo inveniri potest: Nihil enim est in animis mixtum atque concretum, ut quod ex terra natum atque fictum esse videatur.* "The souls

" of men, have not their original from the earth, it is " in vain to seek for it there: For there is nothing in " the mind of man of a material mixture and composi- " tion, which we can imagine to be born or formed out " of the earth. For, says he, among material and " earthly things there is nothing," *quod vim memoriæ, mentis, cogitationis habeat, quod et præterita teneat, & futura provideat, & complecti possit præsentia.* " There " is no earthly thing which hath the power of memory, of " understanding of thought, which retains things past, " foresees and provides for things future, comprehends " and considers things present." *Singularis est igitur quædam natura atque vis animi, sejuncta ab his usitatis notisque naturis;* " so that the nature and power of the " soul, are of a peculiar and singular kind, different " from all those natures which we are acquainted with " in this world." He concludes, *Itaque quicquid est quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vult, quod viget, cæleste & divinum est, ob eamque rem æternum sit necesse est.* " There- " fore whatever that is which is endowed with a power " of perception, with wisdom, with liberty, with so " much vigour and activity as the soul of man, is of hea- " venly and divine original, and for that reason is ne- " cessarily immortal, and to continue for ever."

Thus I have represented to you as briefly and plainly as I could, those which I account the chief and strongest arguments of this great principle of religion, the soul's immortality. Some of them are plain and obvious to every capacity; the rest, though they be above common capacities, yet were not to be neglected, because they may be useful to some, tho' not to all; and as those who are more wise and knowing should have patience, whilst the most common and plainest things are spoken for the instruction of ordinary capacities, so those of lower capacities should be content that many things should be spoken which may be useful to others, though they be above their reach.

To sum up then what has been said from reason, for the proof of the soul's immortality. It is a natural dictate and notion of our minds, universally entertained in all ages and places of the world, excepting some very few persons and sects; it doth not contradict any other prin-

principle that nature hath planted in us, but doth very well agree with thoſe other notions which are moſt natural; it is moſt ſuitable to the natural hopes and fears of men; it evidently tends to the happineſs and perfection of man, and to the good order and government of the world; laſtly, it gives the faireſt account of the phænomena of human nature, of thoſe ſeveral actions and operations which we are conſcious to ourſelves of.

Now, ſuppoſing the ſoul were immortal, what greater rational evidence than this can we expect for it? How can we, without a revelation, have more aſſurance of the things of this nature, than theſe arguments give us, not taken ſingly, but as they concur together to make up an intire argument, and to give us ſufficient evidence of this?

I do not ſay that theſe arguments do ſo neceſſarily conclude it, that there is an abſolute impoſſibility the thing ſhould be otherwiſe; but ſo as to render it ſufficiently certain to a prudent and conſiderate man, and one that is willing to accept of reaſonable evidence. For the generality of the Papiſts do pertinaciouſly maintain this unreaſonable principle, that there can be no certainty of any thing without infallibility: Yet ſome of the wiſer of them have thought better of it, and are pleaſed to ſtate the buſineſs of certainty otherwiſe; particularly Melchior Canus, one of the moſt learned of their writers, determines thoſe to be ſufficiently certain, which no man can, without imprudence and obſtinacy, diſbelieve. *Certa apud homines ea ſunt, quæ negari ſine pervicacia & ſtultitia non poſſunt.* "Men eſteem thoſe things certain, which "no man that is not unreaſonably obſtinate and impru- "dent can deny." And I think the arguments I have brought for the ſoul's immortality, are ſuch, as no man that is unprejudiced, and hath a prudent regard to his own intereſt can reſiſt.

Thus I have done with the firſt thing I propounded to do for the proof of the ſoul's immortality, which was to ſhew what evidence of reaſon there is for it. I ſhall ſpeak briefly to the

Second thing I propounded, which was to ſhew how little can be ſaid againſt it, becauſe this will indirectly give a ſtrength and force to the arguments I have brought

brought for it. For it is very considerable in any question or controversy, what strength there is in the arguments on both sides: For tho' very plausible arguments may be brought for a thing, yet if others as plausible and specious may be urged against it, this leaves the thing in *æquilibrio*, it sets the balance even, and inclines the judgment neither way; nay, if the objections against a thing be considerable, tho' not so strong as the arguments for it, the considerableness of the objections does so far weaken the contrary arguments: But where the arguments on one hand are strong, and the objections on the contrary very slight, and such as may easily be answered, the weakness of the objections contributes to the strength of the argument for the other side of the question.

To come then to the business, I know but three objections which have any colour against this principle.

I. That the notion of a spirit, or an immateral substance, does imply a contradiction.

Answ. 1. This is only boldly said, and not the least colour of proof offered for it by the author that asserts it. This objection had indeed been considerable, if it had been made out as clearly, as it is confidently affirmed. In the mean time I think we may take leave to deny, that the notion of a spirit hath any repugnancy in it, till somebody think fit to prove it.

2. I told you that this question about the soul's immortality supposeth the existence of God to be already proved; and if there be a God, and it be an essential property of the divine nature, that he is a spirit, then there is such a thing as a spirit and immaterial substance, and consequently the notion of a spirit hath no contradiction in it: For if it had, there could be no such thing.

II. It is said, there is no express text for the soul's immortality in the Old Testament.

Answ. This doth not properly belong to the intrinsical arguments and reason of the thing, but is matter of revelation. And this I shall fully speak to, when I come to shew what evidence the Jews had for the soul's immortality. In the mean time, this may be a sufficient answer to this objection, that there is no absolute necessity why it should be expressly revealed in the Old Testament, if it be, as I have shewn, a natural notion of our minds: For

the

the scripture supposeth us to be men, and to have an antecedent notion of those truths which are implanted in our nature, and therefore chiefly designs to teach us the way to that eternal happiness which we have a natural notion and hope of. The

III. Objection is from the near and intimate sympathy which is between the soul and the body, which appears in the vigour and strength of our faculties; as understanding and memory do very much depend upon the temper and disposition of the body, and do usually decay and decline with it.

Answ. The utmost that this objection signifies is, that there is an intimate union and conjunction between the soul and body, which is the cause of the sympathy which we find to be between them: But it does by no means prove, that they are one and the same essence. Now, that there is such an intimate union and connexion betweeen the soul and matter in all creatures endowed with life and sense, is acknowledged by all who affirm the immateriality of souls; though the manner of this union be altogether unknown to us; and supposing such an union, it is but reasonable to imagine that there should be such a sympathy, that the body should be affected with the delights and disturbances of the mind, and that the soul should also take part in the pleasures and pains of the body, that by this means it may be effectually excited and stirred up to provide for the supply of our bodily wants, and necessities; and from this sympathy, it is easy to give account how it comes to pass, that our faculties of understanding, and memory, and imagination, are more or less vigorous, according to the good or bad temper and disposition of our bodies. For by the same reason that the mind may be grieved and afflicted at the pains and sufferings of the body, it may likewise be disordered and weakened in its operations by the distempers of the body. So that this objection only proves the soul to be united to the body; but not to be the same thing with it.

SER.

SERMON CLXXVII.

Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 Tim. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

The fourth sermon on this text.

HAving in my three former discourses, shewed what arguments natural reason doth furnish us with, for the immortality of our souls; I come now to the second thing I propounded, which is to shew what assurance the world had *de facto*, of this great principle of religion, the soul's immortality, before the revelation of the gospel.

Before our Saviour's coming to the world, there were but two different religions: That of the Heathens, and that of the Jews. The religion of the Heathens was natural religion, corrupted and degenerated into idolatry: The religion of the Jews was revealed and instituted by God; but did suppose natural religion, and was superadded to it. Therefore I shall consider the Heathens and the Jews distinctly. And,

First, Shew what assurance the Heathens had of this principle of the soul's immortality.

Secondly, What the Jews had of it.

First, What assurance the Heathens had of the soul's immortality.

1. It is evident that there was a general inclination in mankind, even after its greatest corruption and degeneracy, to the belief of this principle; which appears in that all people and nations of the world, after they were sunk into the greatest degeneracy, and all except only

only the Jews became idolaters, did universally agree in this apprehension, that their souls did remain after their bodies, and pass into a state of happiness or misery, according as they had demeaned themselves in this life. Not that they did generally reason themselves into this apprehension, by any convincing arguments, but did herein follow the bent and tendency of their natures, which did incline them thus to think. For no other reason can be given of the universal consent, even of the most rude and barbarous nations in this principle, besides the inclination of human nature to this opinion; that is, either men come into the world with this notion imprinted upon their minds, or else, which comes all to one, the understanding of man is naturally of such a frame and make, that left to itself, and the free exercise of its own thoughts, it will fall into this apprehension.

2. The unlearned and common people among the Heathen, seem to have had the truest and least wavering apprehensions in this matter; the reason of which seems to be plain, because their belief followed the bias and inclination of their nature, and they had not their natural notions embroiled and disordered by obscure and uncertain reasonings about it, as the Philosophers had, whose understandings were perplexed with infinite niceties and objections, which never troubled the heads of the common people. By which means the vulgar had this advantage, that the natural dictates of their minds had their free course; and as they did not argue themselves into this principle, so neither were their natural hopes and fears checked and controuled by any objections to the contrary.

But then, this principle being only a kind of natural instinct in them, which did not awaken their minds by any deep consideration and reasoning about it, it had no great influence on their lives. For as they were not much troubled with doubts concerning it, so neither did they deeply attend to the consequences of it: But as they followed the inclination of nature in the entertaining of this notion, so because it was not entertained upon deep consideration, it had no great effect upon them.

3. The

3. The learned among the Heathen did not so generally agree in this principle, and those who did consent in it, were many of them more wavering and unsettled than the common people. Epicurus and his followers were peremptory in the denial of it: But by their own acknowledgment, they did herein offer great violence to their natures, and had much ado to divest themselves of the contrary apprehensions and fears. Therefore the poet, in the person of the Epicurean, represents it as a rare piece of happiness, and that which few attained to, to quit themselves of the notions of another state after this life:

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes & inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari.

The Stoicks were very inclinable to the belief of a future state; but yet they almost every where speak very doubtfully of it. Seneca and Antoninus often speak to this purpose, that if the soul remain after this life, there is no doubt but that good men shall be happy, and bad men miserable; but whether the soul out-live the body or not, that they could not positively determine. Aristotle hath some express passages for the soul's immortality; but it seems he was not constant to himself in this matter, or else they have done him a great deal of wrong, who have wrote so many books on both sides concerning his opinion in this point. Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato, and many others of the most eminent philosophers, as Tully tells us, were full, not of assurance, but of very good hopes of the soul's immortality and a future state. Socrates, who was one of the best and wisest of all the Heathens, does in his discourses before his death, as Plato relates them, support and bear up himself against the terrors of death, only with this consideration, that he was full of hopes, that when he left this world, he should pass into a far happier and more perfect state; that he should go to God and live with him, and keep company with the spirits of good men: And that he is not positive and peremptory in it, is no argument that he doubted of this more than any thing else; for that was his fashion in all his

his discourses, to speak modestly, and with some shew of doubting, even concerning those things whereof he had the greatest assurance: But this is plain, that he was so well assured of it, as to die chearfully, and to leave the world without any kind of disturbance, upon the hopes that he had conceived of another life; and surely they must be pretty confident hopes, that will bear up a man's spirit to such a height when he comes to die. In short, he told his friends the morning before he died, that he had as good assurance of the soul's immortality as human reason could give, and that nothing but a divine revelation could give him greater satisfaction. And, to mention no more, Tully, the chief Philosopher among the Romans, expresseth himself with a good degree of confidence in this matter. He argues excellently for it in several parts of his works; but particularly in his book *de Senectute*, he declares his own opinion of it, where, speaking to Scipio and Lælius, he says, "I do not see "why I may not adventure to declare freely to you what "my thoughts are concerning death; and perhaps I may "discern better than others what it is, because I am now, "by reason of my age, not far from it. I believe, says "he, that the fathers, those eminent persons, and my "particular friends are still alive, and that they live the "life which only deserves the name of life." And afterward, *Nec me solum ratio ac disputatio impulit ut ita crederem, sed nobilitas etiam summorum Philosophorum & auctoritas;* "nor has reason only and disputation brought "me to this belief, but the famous judgment and "authority of the chief Philosophers." And having mentioned Pythogoras, Socrates and Plato, he breaks out into this rapture, *Oh præclarum diem, quum in illud animorum concilium cœtumque proficiscar, & cum hac turba & colluvione discedam!* "O glorious day, when I shall go "unto the great council and assembly of spirits, when "I shall go out of this tumult and confusion, and quit "the sink of this world, when I shall be gathered to all "those brave spirits who have left this world, and meet "with Cato, the greatest and best of mankind!" What could a Christian almost say with more extasy? And he concludes, *Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum*

immortales esse credam, libenter erro, nec mihi hunc errorem quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo; sin mortuus, ut quidam minuti Philosophi censent, nihil sentiam, non vereor, ne hunc errorem meum mortui Philosophi irrideant.
"But if after all I am mistaken herein, I am pleased with "my error, which I would not willingly part with "whilst I live: And if after my death, as some little "Philosophers suppose, I shall be deprived of all sense, I "have no fear of being exposed and laughed at by them, "for this my mistake in the other world."

Thus you see what assurance the Heathens had of this principle, and that there was a general inclination and propension in them to the belief of it: And as it was not firmly and upon good grounds, believed among the common people; so neither was it doubted of, or called in question among them. Among the Philosophers, it was a matter of great uncertainty, being stiffly denied by some, doubted of by others; and those who were most inclinable to the entertainment of it, do rather express their desires and hopes of it, than their full assurance concerning it. I come therefore,

Secondly, To the enquiry; what assurance the Jews had of the soul's immortality and a future state? And of this, I shall give you an account in the following particulars.

1. They had all the assurance which natural light, and the common reason of mankind does ordinarily afford men concerning this matter; they had common to them with the Heathens, all the advantage that nature gives men to come to the knowledge of this truth. But that which I chiefly design to enquire into is, what singular advantage they had above the Heathens, by means of those special revelations which were made to them from God. Therefore,

2. They had by divine revelation a fuller assurance of those truths which have a nearer connexion with this principle, and which do very much tend to facilitate the belief of it; as namely, concerning the providence of God, and his interesting himself particularly in the affairs of the world. In the history of Moses they had a satisfactory account of the original of the world, that God made it, and that he had eminently interposed in the go-

government of it; and had given several eminent testimonies of his providence, in the general deluge which was brought upon the world, and in the dreadful particular judgment from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities; in his special providence towards Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; in that series of miracles whereby their deliverance was wrought out of of Egypt, and they were carried through the wilderness to the promised land; and in those two standing miracles of the fruitfulness of every sixth year, because the land was to rest on the seventh, and preserving the land from the invasion of enemies, when they came up to Jerusalem three times a year; by which God did testify a very particular and immediate providence toward them. Now, whatever gives assurance of God's providence, does very much facilitate the belief of a future state. Epicurus was well aware of the connexion of these principles, and therefore, in order to the freeing of the minds of men from the fears of a future state, he makes way for it by removing the providence of God, and denying that he either made the world, or concerned himself in the government of it.

And then, besides this, the Jews had assurance of the existence of spirits, by the more immediate ministry of angels among them. And this does directly make way for the belief of an immaterial principle, and consequently of the soul's immortality. And this the Sadducees, who were a kind of Epicureans among the Jews, were sensible of; and therefore, as they said that there was no resurrection, and no future state after this life, so they denied that there was either angel or spirit, as the Apostle tells us, Acts xxiii. 7. From whence, by the way, we may take notice of the great mistake of those, who, from the opinion of the Sadducees, argue that eternal life was not at all believed under the Old Testament; because, if it had been so, it is not credible that it would have been disowned by those who acknowledged the authority of those books; whereas we see that they denied, to serve their hypothesis, other things which were most expressly revealed in the Old Testament, as the doctrine of Angels and Spirits.

3. There were some remarkable instances in the Old Testament, which did tend very much to persuade men to this truth: I mean the instances of Enoch and Elias, who did not die like other men, but were translated, and taken up into heaven in an extraordinary manner. From which instances it was obvious to considerate men, to reason, that God did intend by these examples to encourage good men with the hopes of another state after this life. And accordingly the Apostle to the Hebrews makes the belief of future rewards, a necessary consequence from this instance of Enoch's translation, Heb. xi. 5, 6. *By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

4. This was typified and shadowed forth to them by the legal administrations. The whole œconomy of their worship and temple, of their rites and ceremonies, and sabbaths, did shadow out some farther thing to them, though in a very obscure manner: The land of Canaan, and their coming to the possession of it, after so many years travel in the wilderness, did represent that heavenly inheritance which good men should be possessed of after the troubles of this life. And these were intended by God to signify those greater and better things to them, and so understood by those who were more devout and knowing among them: else the Apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, had gone upon a very ill ground, when he all along takes it for granted, that the dispensation of the law, and all the ceremonies of it, were of a farther signification, Heb. x. 11. *The law having a shadow of good things to come.*

5. This was in general, and by good consequence, though not obvious to all, yet sufficiently to prudent and discerning men, revealed in the book of the law taken precisely: I mean the five books of Moses. It is said of Abel, that God was pleased with his sacrifice, though with Cain's he was not well pleased, Gen. iv. Upon this Cain was angry at his brother, and slew him.

Now

Now, if the immortality of the soul and a future state, be not supposed and taken for granted in this story, this very passage is enough to cut the sinews, and pluck up the roots of all religion. For if there were no rewards after this life, it were obvious for every man to argue from this story, that it was a dangerous thing to please God; if this were all that Abel got by it, to be knocked on the head by his brother, who offended God.

But I shall chiefly insist upon the general promises which we find in these books of Moses, of God's blessing good men, and declaring that he was their God, even after their death. Now, I shall shew that these promises did involve the happiness of another life, and were intended by God to signify thus much, and were so understood by good men under that dispensation. That these general promises did contain this sense under them, and were intended by God to signify thus much, is evident from our our Saviour's citation of that text, to confute the Sadducees, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;* from whence he reasons thus, *Now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him:* The force of which argument was directly and immediately levelled against the main error of the Sadducees, which was the denial of a future state. This our Saviour immediately proves from this text, and by consequence the resurrection, which the Sadducees did not deny upon any other account, but because they did not* believe a future state.

6. Toward the expiration of the legal dispensation, there was yet a clearer revelation of a future state. The text in Daniel seems to be much plainer than any in the Old Testament, Dan. xii. 2. *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* And to this text the seven brethren, who were cruelly put to death under the persecution of Antiochus, seem to refer, when they comfort themselves with the hopes of another life, 2 Mac. vii. 9. where one of them ready to die, says thus to Antiochus, *Thou, like a fury, takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who*

* See Sermon xxiii. Vol. II.

have died for his laws, unto everlasting life. To the same purpose another of them, ver. 14. when he was tormented, expresseth his confidence thus; *It is good being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him; but as for thee* (speaking of Antiochus) *thou shalt have no resurrection to life.* Where he seems to allude to the two-fold resurrection, mentioned by Daniel. And though this history of the Maccabees be not canonical, yet the Apostle hath warranted the truth of it to us, at least in this particular; for he plainly refers to this story, Heb. xi. 35. *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

7. Notwithstanding this, I say, that the immortality of the soul, and a future state, was not expresly and clearly revealed in the Old Testament, at least not in Moses his law. The special particular promises of that dispensation, were of temporal good things; and the great blessing of eternal life, was but somewhat obscurely involved and signified in the types and general promises: For considering that the particular promises were plainly of temporal things, it was very obvious to those, who were not so prudent and discerning, to interpret the general promises so as to comprehend only that kind of blessings which were expressed in the special and particular promises, and so likewise to understand the general threatnings. And upon this account, the Apostle to the Hebrews principally advanceth the new covenant of the gospel above the old dispensation; because the gospel had clear, and expres, and special promises of eternal life, which the law had not, Heb. viii. 6. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.* For the same reason, Christ is said here in the text, *by his appearance to have abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.* And so I proceed to the

Second thing I propounded, which is to shew what farther evidence and assurance the gospel gives us of it, than the world had before; what clearer discoveries we have by Christ's coming, than the Heathens or Jews had before.

That

That the gospel hath brought to us a clearer discovery of this than they had, is here expressly said; that God's gracious purpose concerning our salvation, which was before the world began, decreed to be accomplished in Christ, is now made manifest by his coming into the world; ver. 9. *Who hath saved and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest,* &c. Which is emphatically spoken now, and not till now, importing that before the appearing of our Saviour, it was in great measure hid from the world, and that men had very dark and obscure apprehensions of it, till it was brought to light by the gospel. And this is not only affirmed in this place, but very frequently all over the New Testament. I will mention some of the most express places to this purpose. John vi. 8. When many of Christ's followers left him, he asks the twelve, *Will ye also go away?* To whom Peter answers, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* As if he had said, what master should we chuse to follow rather than thee, who bringest to the world the glad tidings of eternal life? what discipline or institution is there in the world, that gives such encouragement to its followers? Others may promise great things in this world; but in the declarations and promises of another life, we cannot rely upon any one but him that comes from God, as we are fully perswadeded thou dost; for it follows in the next verse, *And we believe, and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Tit. ii. 11. *&c. The grace of God which brings salvation hath appeared to all men,* &c. Where the revelation of the gospel is called *the grace of God which brings salvation,* that is, which discovers to the world that eternal happiness which was in a great measure hid from it before, and encourageth men by the hopes of that blessing to live a holy life. The Apostle to the Hebrews doth all along in his epistle use this as an argument to the Jews, to take them off from the Mosaical institution, and to perswade them to entertain the doctrine of the gospel, as making clearer discoveries, and giving greater assurance of eternal life and salvation, than the law did.

Heb.

Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4, 5. *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? For unto the Angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.* That is, if the promises and threatnings of the law, which was delivered but by the ministry of angels, were made good, and the offenders under that dispensation were severely punished, what shall become of us, if we neglect the dispensation of the gospel, which reveals to us greater things, even eternal life and salvation, and which receiveth so great a confirmation, both from Christ himself, by whom it was first delivered, and also from his Apostles, who published it to the world, and gave testimony to it by so many miracles? And it follows, at ver. 5. *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we now speak.* The meaning of which is this, the promises and threatnings of the law, which was delivered by angels, were temporal, and such as respected this world; but now God hath sent his Son, he hath in him made promises of a greater salvation, he hath put into his hands the great things of another world, and hath given him power to promise eternal life, and to give it to as many as he pleases. So the danger of contemning the gospel, must needs be much greater than that of the law, because the happiness which the gospel promises, is so much greater. For unto the angels who delivered the law, God gave no power and commission to make clear and express promises of the rewards of another world. *Unto the angels did he not put in subjection the world to come;* but so hath he done to his Son. *He hath committed all judgment to him, and hath given him power to raise up those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation:* as our Saviour himself speaks, John v. 22. and thus *he hath put the world to come in subjection unto his Son,* having empowered him to encourage and argue men

men to the obedience of his laws, by the rewards and punishments of another world: Whereas the law delivered by angels, had only the sanction of temporal threatnings and promises. Heb. vii. 16. The gospel is called *the power of an eternal life*, in opposition to the law, which is called *a carnal commandment*; not only because the precepts of it respected the body, but because the promises of it were of temporal good things which belong to this life; and at the 19th verse, the gospel, in opposition to the Mosaical dispensation, is called *the bringing in of a better hope: the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did;* ἐπεισαγωγὴ, *the superinduction of a better hope*; by which the Apostle plainly signifies, that this was the imperfection of the Mosaical dispensation, that it did not give men firm hopes and assurance of eternal life; but the gospel hath superinduced this hope, and thereby supplied the great defect of the former administration. To the same purpose he tells us, chap. viii. 6. that Christ *hath now obtained a more excellent ministry, for as much as he is the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises.* How better promises? Why, instead of the promises of a temporal Canaan and earthly blessings, Christ hath given us promises of eternal life and happiness. Therefore, in the next chapter, he is called *an High Priest of the good things to come;* and ver. 15. *For this cause*, he is said to be *the Mediator of the New Testament, that they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.* Once more, the Apostle, chap. x. ver. 1. makes this the great imperfection of the law, in opposition to the gospel, that it *had only a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things;* that is, it did but darkly typify and shadow forth the things of another life, not give us so express an image, and lively representation of the rewards of another world, as the gospel does. Therefore St. John makes eternal life to be the great promise of the gospel, the great blessing which Christ hath revealed to the world, 1 John ii. 25. *This is the promise which he hath promised, even eternal life.* So that you see, that the full and clear discovery of eternal life, is every where in the New Testament

ment attributed to Chriſt, and to the revelation which by him was made to the world.

It remains now, that I ſhew more particularly, wherein the goſpel hath given the world greater evidence and aſſurance of a future ſtate than they had before.

1. The rewards of another life are moſt clearly revealed in the goſpel. That God hath made a revelation of this by Chriſt, is an advantage which the Heathen wanted, who were deſtitute of divine revelation. There are many truths which men may be well inclined to believe; and for the proof of which, the wiſer and more knowing ſort of men may be able to offer very fair and plauſible arguments; and yet for all this they may have no confident aſſurance of them, or at leaſt may be very far from a well grounded certainty, ſuch as will give reſt and ſatisfaction to the mind of a conſiderate and inquiſitive man. All men are not capable of the force of a reaſon; nay, there are very few who can truly judge of the weakneſs or ſtrength of an argument. There are many things which admit of very plauſible arguments on both ſides; and the generality of men are very apt to be impoſed upon by very ſlight arguments, to be moved any way with ſome little ſhew and appearance of reaſon. So that when this principle of the ſoul's immortality came to be diſputed in the world, and the ſects of the Philoſophers, the learned men of thoſe times, came to be divided in opinion about it, ſome diſputing directly againſt it, others doubting very much of it, and ſcarce any pretending to any great aſſurance of it, it was no wonder, if by this means many came to be in ſuſpence about it; but now divine revelation, when that comes, it takes away all doubting, and gives men aſſurance of that, concerning which they were uncertain before. For every man that believes a God, does firmly believe this principle, that whatever is revealed by him is true: But eſpecially if the revelation be clear and expreſs, then it gives full ſatisfaction to the mind of man, and removes all jealouſy and ſuſpicions of the contrary. And this is a great advantage which the goſpel gives us in this matter, above what the Jews had. They had ſome kind of revelation

and

and discovery of this under the dispensation of the law; but very darkly, in types and shadows: But the gospel gives us a most express revelation of it is full of special promises to this purpose, made in clear words, free from all ambiguity, or liableness to be interpreted to another sense. So that if we compare the law and the gospel together, we shall see a vast difference as to this matter. Under the law, the promise of eternal life was only comprehended in some general words, from which a man that had true notions of God and religion, might be able to infer, that God intended some reward for good men, and punishment for wicked men beyond this life: But the promises of temporal good things were special and express, and their law was full of them. Contrarywise in the New Testament, the most special and express promise is that of eternal life; and this the Books of the New Testament are full of; as for temporal blessings, they are but sparingly and obscurely promised, in comparison of the other.

2. The rewards of another life, as they are clearly and expressly revealed by the gospel, so that they may have the greater power and influence upon us, and we may have the greater assurance of them, they are revealed with very particular circumstances. And herein the gospel gives us a great advantage, both above the Heathens and Jews. For though a man was satisfied in general of a state after this life, that mens souls should survive their bodies, and pass into another world, where it shall be well with them that have done well in this world, and ill to those that have done ill; yet no man, without a revelation, could conjecture the particular circumstances of that state. What wild descriptions do the Heathen Poets, who were their most antient divines, make of heaven and hell, of the Elysian fields, and the infernal regions! But now the gospel, for our greater assurance and satisfaction, hath revealed many particular circumstances of the future state to us; as that all men at the end of the world shall be summoned to make a solemn appearance before the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath made Judge of the world, as a reward of his patience and sufferings; that the bodies of men shall, in order to that appearance, be raised up by

by the mighty power of God, and united to their souls, that as they have been instruments of the soul in acts of holiness and sin, so they may take part likewise in the happiness and torments of it. There are several other circumstances the gospel hath revealed to us concerning our future state, which had they not been revealed, we could never have known, hardly have conjectured; in all which, besides the assurance that they are revealed, it is a great satisfaction to us, that there is nothing in them that is unworthy of God, or that savours of the weakness and vanity of human imagination.

3. The gospel gives us yet further assurance of these things, by such an argument as is like to be the most convincing and satisfactory to common capacities; and that is by a lively instance of the thing to be proved, in *raising Christ from the dead*, Acts xvii. 30, 31.

It is true indeed, under the Old Testament there were two instances somewhat of this nature; Enoch and Elias were immediately translated and taken up alive into heaven; but these two instances do in many respects fall short of the other. For after Christ was raised from the dead, he conversed forty days with his disciples, and satisfied them that he was risen; after which he was in their sight visibly taken up into heaven: And as an evidence that he was possessed of his glorious kingdom, he sent down, according to his promise, his holy spirit in miraculous gifts, to assure them by those testimonies of his royalty, that he was in heaven, and to qualify them by those miraculous powers, to convince the world of the truth of their doctrine.

Now, what argument more proper to convince them of another life after this, than to see a man raised from the dead, and restored to a new life? what fitter to satisfy a man concerning heaven and the happy estate of those there, than to see one visibly taken up into heaven? and what more fit to assure us, that the promises of the gospel are real, and shall be made good to us, than to see him who made these promises to us, raise himself from the dead, and go up into heaven, and from thence to dispense miraculous gifts and powers abroad in the world, as evidences of the power and authority which he was in-

invested withal? All the philosophical arguments that a man can bring for the soul's immortality, and another life, will have no force upon vulgar apprehensions, in comparison of these sensible demonstrations, which give an experiment of the thing, and furnish us with an instance of something of the same kind, and of equal difficulty with that which is propounded to our belief.

4. And lastly, the effects which the clear discovery of this truth had upon the world, are such, as the world never saw before, and are a farther inducement to persuade us of the truth and the reality of it. After the gospel was entertained in the world, to shew that those who embraced it did fully believe this principle, and were abundantly satisfied concerning the rewards and happiness of another life; they did, for the sake of their religion, despise this life, and all the enjoyments of it, from a thorough persuasion of a far greater happiness than any this world could afford, remaining in the next life. With what chearfulness did they suffer persecutions, with what joy and triumph did they welcome torments, and embrace death, *knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance!* Thus when *life and immortality was brought to light by the gospel*, death was as it were quite abolished; those of the weakest age and sex, women and children, did familiarly encounter it with as great a bravery, and bore up against the terrors of it with as much courage, as any of the greatest spirits among the Romans ever did: And this not in few instances, but in vast numbers. No Emperor in the world ever had so numerous an army of persons resolved to fight for him, as this *Captain of our salvation*, this *Prince of life and glory*, had of persons couragiously resolved, and chearfully contented to die for him.

Now, this wonderful effect, the like of which the world never saw before, was very suitable to the nature of this doctrine. Suppose that God from heaven should have given men assurance of another life after this, in which good men should be unspeakably happy; what more reasonable to imagine, than that persons so assured should despise this life, and all the enjoyments of it, in

comparison of the eternal and unconceivable happiness which they were persuaded they should be made partakers of in another world? So that whatver assurance an express and clear revelation from God of the soul's immortality and another life, together with the particular circumstances of that state; whatever assurance a lively instance and example of the thing, in the person of him who brings this doctrine to the world; whatever consequent miracles, and suitable effects upon the minds of men to such a principle: I say, whatever assurance and satisfaction these can give of this principle, all this the gospel hath given us, beyond whatever the Heathens or Jews had before.

The inference I shall make from this discourse, shall be only this, that if there be such a state after this life, then how does it concern every man to provide for it? Every action that we do in this life, will have a good or bad influence upon our everlasting condition, and the consequences of it will extend themselves to eternity. Did men seriously consider this, that they carry about them immortal souls that shall live for ever, they would not trifle away the opportunities of this life, bend all their thoughts, and employ their designs in the present gratification of their senses, and the satisfaction of their fleshly part, which shall shortly die and moulder into dust: But they would make provision for the state which is beyond the grave, and lay designs for eternity, which is infinitely the most considerable duration; they would not, like children, take care for the present, without any prospect to the future, and lay out all they have to please themselves for a day, without any regard to the remaining part of their lives. Nothing can be more unbecoming Christians, whose whole religion pretends to be built upon the firm belief of another world, than to be intent upon the things of this present life, to the neglect of their souls and all eternity.

Seeing then we pretend to be assured of immortal life, and to have clear discoveries of everlasting happiness and glory, as we hope to be made partakers of this portion, let us live as it becomes the candidates of heaven, those that are heirs of another world, and *the children of the resurrection*, that this *grace of God, which hath brought salva-*

salvation, may teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present life, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

SERMON CLXXVIII.

Of the certainty of a future judgment.

2 Cor. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The first sermon on this text.

THE Apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, expresseth his earnest desire, if God saw it fit, to quit *this earthly tabernacle, for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, to be *absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* But however God should dispose of him, he tells us that he made it his constant endeavour, so to behave himself, that both in this present state, whilst he continued in the body, and when he should quit it, and appear before God, he might be approved and accepted of him. And that which made him so careful was, because there was a day certainly coming, wherein every man must give an account of himself to the great Judge of the world, and receive the just recompence of his actions done in this life, ver. 9, 10. *Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Which words are so plain and powerful, so easy to be understood, and of such a mighty force and influence, if thoroughly believed, that the very repeating of them

is ſufficient to awaken men to a ſerious care of their lives and actions, and a powerful conſideration to perſuade them to do every thing, with reſpect to that ſolemn account they muſt one day make to God of all the actions done in this life.

But that the truth contained in them, may make the greater impreſſion upon us, I ſhall diſtinctly conſider the words, and handle as briefly as I can, the ſeveral propoſitions contained in them.

The general and principal propoſition contained in theſe words is, the certainty of a future judgment.

But beſides this principal propoſition, which comprehends the general meaning and intention of theſe words, there are four other more particular propoſitions contained in them.

Firſt, That the adminiſtration of this judgment will be committed to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; for which reaſon the tribunal before which we muſt appear, is called, *The judgment ſeat of Chriſt. We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt.*

Secondly, That all men are liable to this judgment; no perſon of what condition ſoever ſhall be exempted from it. *We muſt all appear.*

Thirdly, That all the actions which men have done in this life ſhall then come to account, and they ſhall be judged for them. *That every one may receive the things done in the body.*

Fourthly, That ſentence will then be paſſed according to the quality of mens actions whether good or bad: *Every one ſhall receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil.*

But I ſhall at preſent only ſpeak to the principal propoſition contained in the words, concerning the certainty of a future and general judgment, *viz.* That at the end of the world, there ſhall be a general and publick aſſize, when all perſons that have lived in this world (except only the judge himſelf, our bleſſed Saviour, who is *the man ordained by God to judge the world*) ſhall come upon their trial, and all the actions which they have done, ſhall come under a ſtrict examination; and according as men have demeaned themſelves in this world, towards God and man, they ſhall receive ſentence, and rewards

ſhall

shall be distributed to them according to the nature and quality of their actions. And tho' all these particulars be not expressed in the text, yet they are virtually contained in the general expressions of it, and fully and clearly delivered in other texts of Scripture.

The truth and certainty of a future and general judgment, I shall endeavour to confirm from these three heads of arguments.

1. From the acknowledgments of natural light.

2. From the notions which men generally have of God and his providence.

3. From express and clear revelation of holy scripture.

I. From the acknowledgments of natural light. And I might shew the general consent of mankind in this matter, by all sorts of human testimonies; and from all kinds of writers in all ages: But this would be almost endless, and not so proper for a plain and practical discourse upon this subject. And therefore passing by testimonies, I shall mainly insist upon this, that the consciences of men do secretly acknowledge a difference between good and evil. Hence it is that men find great peace, and quiet and satisfaction of mind, in the doing of good and virtuous actions, and have secret and comfortable hopes, that this kind of actions will sometime or other be considered and rewarded; and they are apt to maintain these hopes, and to support themselves with them, even when they despair to meet with any reward of their good and honest actions in this world.

And on the other hand, men find a secret fear and horror, and are inwardly ashamed and confounded in their own minds, when they are about a wicked enterprize, and engaged in an ill design; their consciences check them and terrify them, and their own minds bode ill to them, as if mischief and vengeance would overtake them one time or other; and this, when no eye sees them, and what they are a-doing does not fall under the cognizance of any human court or tribunal, nor is liable to any censure or punishment from any human authority; yet, for all that, they have many stings and lashes from their own minds, feel many checks and rebukes from their own consciences, when they do any thing which

they ought not to do, tho' no man can charge them with it, or call them to an account for it.

Now these hopes and fears do argue, if not the firm belief and persuasion of a future judgment, yet great suspicions and misgivings of it in bad men; and in good men, secret and comfortable apprehensions concerning it. From whence else can it be, that good men, tho' they find that virtue is discountenanced, and goodness many times suffers, and is persecuted in this world, and that the best actions and designs are often unsuccessful; whence, I say, is it, that good men, notwithstanding this, bear up and persist in their course, but because they have this inward apprehension and persuasion, that there will be a time, when virtue and goodness will be considered and rewarded, tho' not in this world? And whence is it, that bad men, tho' they prosper in their impiety, are yet guilty, and fearful and timorous, but because they stand in awe of a being, greater and more righteous, and more powerful than themselves; but because they have some secret apprehensions of an invisible judge, and inward presage of a future vengeance, which sooner or later will overtake them; and because they believe there will be a time when all the wickedness they have done shall be accounted for? Insomuch that when they have done what they can, they cannot shake off these fears, nor quit themselves of these apprehensions of divine justice, threatening and pursuing them for their evil deeds. All which are plain acknowledgments of a natural apprehension and persuasion born with us, and riveted in our minds, concerning a future judgment.

II. This will farther appear from the natural notions which men have of a God, and his providence. This is essential to the notion of a God, that he is good, and holy, and just; and consequently, that he loves goodness, and hates iniquity; and therefore it must be agreeable to his nature, to countenance the one, and to discountenance the other, in such a manner as becomes the wise Sovereign and Governor of the world. Now, this cannot be solemnly and openly done, but by a publick distribution of rewards and punishments; and this we see is not done in this world. The dispensations of God's

God's providence in this world, toward good and bad men, are many times very promiſcuous and very croſs, and contrary to what might be expected from the wiſe and juſt Sovereign of the world, from one whom we believe to love righteouſneſs, and to hate iniquity. For virtuous and holy men are often ill treated in this world, grievouſly haraſſed and afflicted, and that *for righteouſneſs ſake:* and bad men many times flouriſh and are proſperous, *they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men.* And this is a very great objection againſt the providence of God; if there were no other conſideration had of virtue and vice, no other kind of retribution made to good and bad men, but what we ſee in this world. And therefore the juſtice of the divine providence ſeems to require, that there ſhould be a day of recompence, and a ſolemn and publick diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments to the righteous and to the wicked. For this is plainly a ſtate of trial and probation, of patience and forbearance to ſinners, and of exerciſe to good men; and being a ſtate of trial, it is not ſo proper a ſeaſon for the diſtribution of publick juſtice. But ſince the juſtice of God doth not appear in this world, it ſeems very reaſonable to believe, that there will be a time when it will be made manifeſt, and every eye ſhall ſee it; that God will one day fully vindicate his righteouſneſs, and acquit the honour of his juſtice, and that there ſhall be a general aſſize held, when all men ſhall have a fair and open trial, and *God will render to every man according to his works.*

Now, the juſtice of God's providence is in a great meaſure hid and covered, but there will come ἡμέρα ἀποκαλύψεως (as the Apoſtle calls the day of judgment, Rom. ii. 5.) *A day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; when he will bring forth his righteouſneſs as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day, and every mouth ſhall be ſtopped;* and every conſcience and heart of man acknowledge *the righteous judgment of God.*

And in the mean time, God contents himſelf to give ſome particular and remarkable inſtances of his rewarding and puniſhing juſtice in this world, which may be to us an earneſt of a future and general judgment; he is pleaſed ſometimes in the diſpenſations of his providence, clearly

clearly to separate and distinguish *the precious from the vile*, remarkably to deliver good men, and *to snare the wicked in the works of their own hands*. Sometimes he gives good men some foretastes of heaven, some earnest of their future happiness in this life: And, on the other hand, he many times gives sinners some *præjudicia divini judicii*, some intimations of a future judgment, and shadows of that *utter darkness*, where they are to dwell for ever; he drops down now and then a little of hell into the conscience of a sinner. That fire which is kindled in some mens consciences in this life, that unspeakable anguish, and those inexplicable horrors, which some sinners have felt in this world, may serve to give us notice of the extreme severity of the divine justice towards impenitent sinners: That miraculous deluge that swept away the old world; those stupendous and terrible showers of fire and brimstone, which consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about; that dreadful earthquake which swallowed up Corah and his company, and let them down as it were, quick into hell, may serve for pledges and earnests to us of the dismal punishments and torments of the next world.

But notwithstanding all these particular and remarkable instances of the divine justice, yet considering how unequal and promiscuous the greatest part of God's providences are in this world, it is highly requisite, that there should be a general judgment, for a more clear and full manifestation of the justice and equity of the divine providence.

III. But this will most evidently appear from the clear and express revelation of the holy scripture. I will not cite texts out of the Old Testament to this purpose, because these things were but obscurely revealed to the Jews in comparison, *Life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel*. Yet St. Jude tells us, that there was an early revelation of this to the old world, ver. 14, 15. *And Enoch also the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly*. But whether this refers to the flood, or the final judgment of the world, is not so clear and certain; however this is most

moſt plainly revealed by our bleſſed Lord and Saviour in the New Teſtament. The proceſs of this great day, with ſeveral of the particular circumſtances of it, are fully deſcribed by our Saviour, Matth. xxv. and in the viſion of St. John, Rev. xx. 11, 12, 13. and the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour do moſt frequently declare and inculcate it, Acts xvii. 30, 31. *But now commandeth all men every where to repent: Becauſe he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* Rom. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. where, ſpeaking of the day of judgment, he calls it *the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil.* 1 Pet. i. 17. *And if ye call on the Father, who, without reſpect of perſons judgeth according to every man's work.* 2 Pet. iii. 10. *But the day of the Lord will come, in which the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe,* &c.

Thus you ſee the truth and certainty of a future judgment confirmed, from the acknowledgments of mens natural hopes and fears, from the natural notions which men have concerning God and his providence, and from plain revelation of ſcripture.

All that I ſhall do farther, at preſent, ſhall be to make ſome reflections upon what hath been delivered, concerning the certainty of a future general judgment. And,

I. If there be ſuch a day certainly a coming, it may juſtly be matter of wonder and aſtoniſhment to us, to ſee the general impiety and ſtupidity of men, how wicked they are, and how careleſs of their lives and actions, and how inſenſible of that *great and terrible day of the Lord,* which is coming upon all fleſh; and for any thing we know to the contrary, may be very near us, and *even at the door.* How ſecurely do the great part of men paſs away their time, ſome in worldly buſineſs, others in worldly pleaſures and vanity, and a great many in

in wickedneſs and vice? Surely ſuch men have no apprehenſions of a future judgment: Surely they do not believe that there will be any memorial of their actions in another world, and that they ſhall be called to a ſtrict and ſevere account for all the actions of this life: they do not think that there is a juſt and powerful being above them, who now obſerves every thing that they do, and will one day judge them for; that there is a pen always writing, and making a faithful record of all the paſſages of their lives; and that theſe volumes ſhall one day be produced and *opened, and men ſhall be judged out of the things that are written in them;* and all our thoughts, words and actions, ſhall paſs under a moſt ſevere trial and examination.

Or if men do believe theſe things, they ſtifle and ſuppreſs this belief, and *detain this great truth of God in unrighteouſneſs;* they do not attend to it, and conſider it, that it may have its due awe and influence upon their lives. For it is not imaginable that if men were poſſeſſed with a firm belief and perſuaſion of this *great and terrible day of the Lord,* they ſhould be ſo careleſs and ſecure, as we ſee they are, and have ſo little regard to what they do; that they ſhould paſs whole days, and weeks, and years, in the groſs neglect of God and religion, and of their immortal ſouls; that they ſhould ſpend their days in vanity, and their years in pleaſure: That they ſhould live in a continued courſe of impiety and profaneneſs, of lewdneſs and intemperance, in the curſed habits of ſwearing and curſing; which are now grown ſo common among us, that a man cannot walk in the ſtreet, without having his ears grated with this helliſh noiſe; and that they ſhould go on in theſe courſes, without any great regret or diſturbance, as if no danger attended them, as if juſtice were aſleep, and all their actions would be buried with them, and never riſe up againſt them.

What can we reſolve this into, but either into habitual or actual atheiſm and infidelity? Either men do not at all believe a judgment to come; or elſe they do not actually conſider it, and attend to the natural and proper conſequences of ſuch a belief. One of theſe two is neceſſary. It ſeems very hard to charge the generality of wicked

wicked men with habitual atheism and unbelief, but that the spirit of God in scripture so often does it, Psal. xiv. 1. *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.* How doth that appear? it follows, *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good:* and Psal. xxxvi. 1. *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.* David speaks, as if the wicked practices of men did convince him, that they had no belief and apprehension of a God.

Nay, even after those clear discoveries, which the gospel hath made of a future judgment, our Saviour seems to foretel a general infidelity among men, at least, as to this particular article of a future judgment, Luke xviii. 8. *Nevertheless when the Son of Man shall come, shall he find faith upon the earth?* and St. Peter tells us, 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. that *there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?* that is, deriding the belief and expectation which the Christians had of a future judgment.

But to be sure, if the generality of men be not already sunk thus low, as to disbelieve these things, yet this, at least, is evident from the lives of men, that they are strangely inconsiderate, and guilty of the most gross and stupid inadvertency that can befal reasonable creatures. For I dare appeal to any man of understanding and serious consideration, whether a greater folly and madness can be imagined, than for men to profess in good earnest to believe, that there is a day shortly coming, wherein they shall appear before the impartial tribunal of the great Judge of the world, and all the actions of their lives shall be ransacked and laid open, and that there is not any thing that ever they did, that shall escape a severe censure; yea, and farther to be persuaded, that as it shall upon that trial appear, that they have demeaned themselves in this world, they shall be sentenced to an eternal and unchangeable state of happiness or misery in the other world; and yet after all this conviction, to live at such a mad and careless rate, as no man in reason can live, but he that is undoubtedly certain of the contrary of all this, and verily per-

perſuaded in his heart, that not one ſyllable of what the goſpel ſays concerning theſe matters, is true; this is ſo incredible a ſtupidity and folly, that did not frequent and undeniable experience make us ſure of the truth of it, out of mere charity and reſpect of human nature, it were not to be believed. *Conſider this all ye that forget God, and put far from you the evil day; conſider and ſhew yourſelves men, O ye tranſgreſſors!* who profeſs to believe a future judgment, and yet run the hazard of it as if ye had no fear and ſuſpicion of any ſuch thing.

II. Having conſidered, not without wonder and aſtoniſhment, what manner of perſons the generality of men are, notwithſtanding all the aſſurance we have of a future judgment, let us in the next place conſider, *ſeeing theſe things ſhall be, what manner of perſons we ought to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs, waiting for, and haſtening unto the coming of the day of God*, as the Apoſtle argues, 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12. How ſhould the ſerious belief of this great principle of religion work upon us, that *we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil?* St. Paul tells us, that the conſideration of it, had a mighty awe and influence upon him, to be careful of himſelf, and to be concerned for others: to be careful of himſelf, in the verſe before the text, *Wherefore we labour, that whether preſent or abſent, we may be accepted of him: For we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt.* And to be concerned for others, that they may prevent the terrors of that day, in the verſe immediately after the text, *knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men. Knowing the terror of the Lord;* it were no difficult matter to make ſuch a dreadful repreſentation of this *great and terrible day of the Lord*, as would affright the ſtouteſt ſinner, and make every joint of him to tremble: But it is much more deſirable, that men ſhould be wrought upon by reaſon, and convinced and perſuaded by a calm and ſober conſideration of things; becauſe that is likely to have a beter and more laſting effect, than preſent terror and amazement; and therefore I ſhall content myſelf with the naked repreſentation of the thing, in the plain and power-

powerful expreſſions of the holy ſcriptures. Imagine, then thou ſaweſt the Son of man coming in great power and great glory, and all his holy angels with him; that thou heardſt the great trumpet ſound, and a mighty voice piercing the heavens and the earth, ſaying, ariſe ye dead, and come to judgment. Suppoſe thou ſaweſt the thrones ſet, and the great Judge ſitting upon the throne of his glory; and all nations gathered before him, and all the dead, both ſmall and great, ſtanding before God, the books opened, and the dead judged out of the things written in thoſe books; and the ſeveral ſentences pronounced from the mouth of Chriſt himſelf, *come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;* and, *depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* Would not this be a dreadful and amazing ſight! Why, the goſpel plainly declares that all this ſhall be, and thou profeſſeſt to believe it. Why then doſt thou not live as if thou didſt believe theſe things? Why ſhould not that which will certainly be, have to all reaſonable purpoſes the ſame effect upon thee, as if it were already and actually preſent? Why do men ſuffer themſelves to be diverted from the attentive conſideration of ſo important a matter, by the impertinent trifles of this world? Why do we not make wiſe and ſpeedy preparation for that day, which will certainly come? But we are uncertain when it will come, for it will come as a thief in the night, and as a ſnare upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Why doſt thou ſtifle thy conſcience, and drown the loud cries of it, with the din and noiſe of worldly buſineſs: Why doſt thou at any time, check and ſuppreſs the thoughts of a future judgment, and put far from thee the evil day; and not rather ſuffer the terrors of it to haunt and purſue thee, till they have made thee weary of thy wicked life, till they have reclaimed thee to thy duty, and effectually perſuaded thee to break off thy ſins by repentance? and to reſolve upon ſuch a holy and virtuous courſe of life, that thou mayeſt be able, not only with peace and comfort, but with joy and triumph, to entertain the thoughts of that day?

Reaſon thus with thyſelf, if this day be ſo dreadful at a diſtance, that I can hardly now bear the thoughts of it, how inſupportable will the thing itſelf be, when it comes to be preſent? and if it will come nevertheleſs, nor the later for my not thinking of it, is it not reaſonable inſtead of putting away the thoughts of it, to endeavour by all poſſible means to prevent the terrors of it?

We eſpecially, who profeſs ourſelves Chriſtians, and live in the clear light of the goſpel, ought to conſider, that we cannot plead ignorance for our excuſe, as the Heathen world might. We read and hear the goſpel every day, wherein the wrath of God is clearly revealed againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men; ſo that if we continue impenitent, we have no cloke, no excuſe for ourſelves; woe unto us above all others! *It ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for us. The times of ignorance*, ſaith St. Paul, ſpeaking of the Heathen world, *the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now he commands all men every where to repent, becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* Thus much concerning the general propoſition, the certainty of a future judgment.

SER-

SERMON CLXXIX.

Of the perſon by whom the world ſhall be judged.

2 COR. v. 10.

For we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN theſe words, beſides the general point mainly intended, concerning the certainty of a future and general judgment, there are likewiſe ſeveral particular propoſitions.

Firſt, That the adminiſtration of this judgment is committed to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

Secondly, That all men are liable to this judgment.

Thirdly, That all the actions which men have done in this life ſhall then come to account, and they ſhall be judged for them.

Fourthly, That this ſentence ſhall be paſſed upon men, according to the nature and quality of their actions, whether good or evil. I have handled the general point, the certainty of a future judgment: I ſhall now proceed to the particular propoſitions contained in the text, and ſhall handle them in the order in which I have propoſed them.

Firſt, That the adminiſtration of this judgment is committed to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and that he is the perſon conſtituted and ordained of God, to be the Judge of the world. The tribunal before which we muſt ſtand, is here in the text called the judgment ſeat of Chriſt. We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt. In the proſecution of this I ſhall,

Firſt, Endeavour to confirm and illuſtrate the truth of this propoſition.

Secondly, Draw some inferences from it, by way of application.

First, For the confirmation of it, I shall do these two things:

I. Prove it from clear testimony of scripture.

II. Endeavour to give some account of this œconomy and dispensation: why God hath committed the administration of this great work to the Lord Jesus Christ; in all which I rely only upon scripture, the thing being capable of no other proof or evidence. And indeed, the whole mediatory undertaking of our blessed Saviour, and all the circumstances of it, are matter of pure revelation; this is the hidden and manifold wisdom of God, which none of the Princes and philosophers of this world knew, and which we could not possibly have found out and discovered, had not God been pleased to reveal it to us.

I. I shall prove this from express testimony of scripture, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the person constituted and ordained by God, to administer the judgment of the great day. Matth. xiii. 40, 41, 42, 43. *So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth, as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* Here our Saviour is represented as the chief minister of God's justice, in the distribution of rewards to the righteous and the wicked; and though the effect and execution of the sentence only be expressed, yet it supposeth a judicial process preceding. So likewise Matth. xvi. 27. *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his work. Shall come in the glory of his Father*, that is, with his authority committed to him. Matth. xiv. 30. where our Saviour, speaking of his coming to judge the world, it is said, *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*; that is, in order to the judgment of the world. But most fully and expressly, Matth. xxv. 31. where

where you have the manner of his coming particularly described, together with the solemn representation of the process of that day. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand,* &c. You see the whole administration of this judgment, and the management of every part of it is committed to Christ. John v. 22. Our Saviour there produceth his commission, and tells us from whence this authority was derived to him: *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* And ver. 27. *He hath given him authority also to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* Acts x. 42. *And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that it is he that is ordained of God, to be the judge of quick and dead.* Acts xvii. 31. *He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained,* that is, by Jesus Christ; for it follows, *whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Rom. ii. 16. *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.* Rom. xiv. 10. *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.* 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9. The Apostle there speaking of the day of judgment, describes it thus: *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* 2 Tim. iv. 1. *I charge thee,* saith St. Paul there to Timothy, *before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.* Rev. xxii. 12. *Behold, I come quickly,* saith our Lord, *and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.* I proceed to the

II. Thing I proposed, namely, to give some account why God hath committed the administration of this

work into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of this I shall give an account in these two particulars:

1. God thought fit to confer this honour upon Christ, as a suitable reward of his patience and sufferings.

2. He thought fit likewise hereby to declare the righteousness and equity of his judgment, in that mankind is judged by one in their own nature, a man like themselves.

1. God hath thought fit to confer this honour upon Christ, as a suitable reward of his obedience and sufferings, of his coming into the world by his appointment, to undertake the work of our redemption, and to mediate a reconciliation between God and us, of his voluntary submission to a condition so mean and low, to that poverty and contempt, and to those extreme sufferings which he did so patiently undergo, in the prosecution of this great design.

That God hath committed all power to Christ, with design to put an honour upon him, our Saviour himself tells us, John v. 22, 23. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.* The scripture speaks of this matter, as if, when Christ undertook the great work of our redemption, it were expressly covenanted between God the Father and him, that he should undertake this work, and submit to all those grievous things, which were necessary to be done and suffered, in order to the effecting of it; and that when he had accomplished it, God would confer this glory upon him, that in his human nature he should be *exalted to the right hand of God, and have power given him over all flesh, to judge the world, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleased;* and when he had received this reward, that then his mediatory office should cease, and he should *resign up the kingdom to God the Father, that God might be all in all.* This is the scope and design of the several texts of scripture concerning this matter.

With relation to this covenant and agreement between him and his Father, he prays, John xvii. 1, 2. that he would not be unmindful of the glory which he had promised to invest him withal. *Father, the hour is come;*

come; glorify the Son, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And ver. 4, 5. *I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* And then he claims the reward of it. *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self.* And the Apostle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 2. tells us, that the hopes of this did encourage and bear up our Lord under his sufferings, *Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* And St. Peter tells us, 1 Pet. i. 11. that *the prophets of old testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.* And St. Paul tells us what this glory is, Eph. i. 20, 21. viz. that *God hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.* But most expressly, Phil ii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. the same Apostle tells us, that in consideration of the great humiliation and sufferings of Christ, *God hath highly exalted him. He made himself of no reputation,* (he emptied himself,) *and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* And that the giving of this name and authority to Christ, upon account whereof all creatures shall be subject to him, doth principally import that power of judging the world, which was committed to him, is evident from the explication of these phrases, of bowing the knee to Christ, and of confessing to him with the tongue, which the same Apostle tells us elsewhere do signify our being judged by him. Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12. *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall con-*

confeſs to God. So then every one of us ſhall give an account of himſelf to God.

So that you ſee, that the glorious reward of Chriſt's ſelf-denial and ſuffering, doth principally conſiſt in having the judgment of the world committed to him, which therefore is called his kingdom, Mat. xvi. 28. where our Saviour expreſſeth it, by the Son of man's coming in his kingdom. 2 Tim. iv. 1. *I charge thee therefore,* (ſaith St. Paul to Timothy) *before God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.* And it is with relation to this power and authority, that the title of King is given to him, Matth. xxv. 34. *Then ſhall the King ſay unto them on his right hand,* &c. And the ſcripture almoſt every where when it ſpeaks of Chriſt's coming, calls it *his glorious appearance,* Matth. xvi. 27. *They ſhall ſee the Son of Man coming in the glory of his Father.* Matth. xxiv. 30. *They ſhall ſee the Son of Man coming with power and great glory.* Matth. xxv. 31. *When the Son of man ſhall come in his glory.* And Tit. ii. 13. it is called, *the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

And this is a very ſuitable reward of his great ſubmiſſion and ſufferings, that he who lived in ſo mean and obſcure a condition, ſhould come in great glory; that he who was rejected and deſpiſed of men, ſhould be attended on by mighty angels; that he who was arraigned and condemned by the powers of the world, ſhould have authority given him to ſummon all, both ſmall and great, the kings and great men, and judges of the earth, to appear at his bar, and to receive ſentence at his mouth.

And this ſhall be the laſt act of his mediatorſhip, to ſit in judgment upon the world, to diſtribute rewards to his faithful ſervants, and to puniſh his obſtinate and implacable enemies. And when this work is finiſhed, then his authority ſhall expire, and the office and kingdom of the Mediator ſhall ceaſe; *for when he ſhall have ſubdued all things to himſelf,* as the Apoſtle expreſly tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. &c. *then cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he ſhall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.*

power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that hath put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

2. God hath committed the administration of this judgment to Christ, that he might hereby declare the righteousness and equity of it, in that mankind is judged by one in their own nature, a man like themselves: And therefore we find that the scripture, when it speaks of Christ, as Judge of the world, doth almost constantly call him Man, and the Son of Man. In the places I have mentioned before, Matth. xiii. 41. *The Son of Man shall send forth his Angels.* And Matth. xvi. 27. *The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father.* Matth. xxiv. 30. *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.* Matth. xxv. 31. *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory.* Acts xvii. 31. *He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.* By the constant use of which expression, the scripture doth give us plainly to understand, that this great honour of being Judge of the world, was conferred upon the human nature of Christ. For as he is God, he is over all, and Judge of the world, and could not derive this power from any, it being originally inherent in the Deity. Which likewise appears in those expressions, of his being ordained a Judge, and having all authority and judgment committed and given to him. Acts xvii. 31. *He shall judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.* And John v. 22. *The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son.* And ver. 27. *He hath given him authority to execute judgment.* Now, this cannot be said of Christ as God, but in respect of his human nature. And this is clear beyond all exception, by what our Saviour adds, as a reason why this authority is committed to him; *He hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man;* that is, because in that respect, and no other, he is capable of having this authority derived to him; for, as he is the Son of God, he hath it in himself. And perhaps for this reason like-

likewise, because in respect of his human nature, he is visible; a man being part of the visible creation of God, and the judgment of the great day being to be administered in a visible manner, and to that end the bodies of men to be raised and united to their souls, in order to their visible appearance at this judgment; it seems very congruous that the Son of man, clothed in our nature, and invested with a human body, should sit in judgment upon mankind.

But principally, because nothing can more effectually declare the equity of this judgment, and that it shall be administered in righteousness, than that God hath ordained a man like ourselves to sit in judgment upon us. In human judgments, it is reckoned a great piece of equity, for men to be tried by their peers, to be acquitted or condemned by those, who are as near as may be to them, and in the same circumstances of rank and condition with themselves; because such are like to understand their case best, and to have a fair and equitable consideration of all the circumstances belonging to it. Now Christ, as he is the Son of Man, is near to us, *Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, made in all things like unto us, only without sin;* which was necessary to qualify him to be our Judge; he dwelt among us, and understands all our circumstances, and whatever may have influence upon our case, to extenuate or aggravate our guilt. What the Apostle to the Hebrews says of Christ as an High-priest, may be applied to him as a Judge, Heb. iv. 15. *We have not a Judge, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

That which now remains, is to draw some inferences from what I have discoursed to you upon this argument.

1. If the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the world, and we must all appear before his judgment-seat, then it greatly concerns every one of us so to demean ourselves in this world, that we may be accepted of him in the next. If a man be to be tried for his life, how will he court the favour of the Judge, that when he comes to stand at his bar, he may receive a gracious sentence from his mouth? Why, there is a day certainly coming

ing when every one of us must appear before the tribunal of the great Judge of the world; and therefore we should, with all possible care and diligence, endeavour to approve our consciences, and all the actions of our lives to him. *Wherefore we labour*, (saith the Apostle immediately before my text) *that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* This is that which makes his acceptance and approbation so valuable and considerable, that he is to be our Judge, to him we must stand or fall, by his sentence we shall be cast or cleared for ever.

We are very apt to court the favour of great men, of the princes and judges of this world, that when we come to stand in need of it, we may have the benefit and comfort of it. But this is not our great interest; for the sentence that men can pass upon us, doth but operate for a little while, the effect and consequences of it do not reach beyond this world; it is not final and conclusive as to our eternal state. To allude to that saying of Solomon's, *Many seek the prince's favour; but every man's judgment is of the Lord.* We seek the favour of the great men of this world; but there is a greater man than any of these, whom we are apt to despise and neglect, *The Prince of the Kings of the earth, the Man who is ordained of God, to be Judge both of quick and dead.*

Every man's judgment shall be from him, it is his sentence, which above all other we have most reason to desire or dread. Therefore we should have regard to him, and by submitting to his scepter, and yielding a willing obedience to the laws of his holy gospel, seek his favour, *lest he break us with a rod of iron, and dash us in pieces like a potter's vessel.* This advice we find given to the kings and rulers of the earth, Psal. ii. 10, 11, 12. *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; and be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little: Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

2. This is matter of great comfort to all sincere Christians, that Christ shall judge the world; as it likewise is of

of great terror to all that disobey the gospel, and by their wicked lives confute their profession, and pretended belief of it. Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, and to none else. He hath not only purchased this salvation for us, but by a publick, and solemn and authoritative sentence, will confer it upon us.

Indeed it is justly matter of great terror to the wicked of the world, who live in ungodliness and worldly lusts, and under the name and title of Christians, have trampled under foot the Son of God, and by their lives have openly declared, that they would not have this man rule over them. Sure it cannot but be matter of great horror and amazement to such persons, to think of this Judge, and to consider, that he, whom by their lewd lives and practices they have so contemned in this world, will sit as judge upon them, and condemn them in the next. And therefore our Saviour tells us, Luke xxi. 25. *&c.* that when the day of judgment shall surprize the world, and *they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;* then the wicked of the earth shall be in great distress and perplexity, and *their hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth;* but that to good men it shall be a day of great joy, and that the approach of it shall revive their spirits, and raise their heads, ver. 28. *But when these things shall begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads with joy, because your redemption draws nigh.*

And this consideration is matter of great comfort to all good men, both upon account of their sufferings and services for Christ. In respect of their sufferings for him; in this world they are exposed to great trials and persecutions for him: But he, for whose name we suffer, is to give us our reward; he, who is of the same nature with us, and took part of flesh and blood, and suffered himself in the flesh, more grievously than any of us can suffer; he it is to whom God hath referred it, to consider our sufferings, and give what rewards to them he thinks fit. And then, in respect of our services; though the best of them be imperfect, and nothing that we do is able to abide the severity of his justice, yet, by virtue of

of his meritorious sacrifice and satisfaction, the imperfection of them is pardoned, and the sincerity of them is accepted. For he being our Judge, who was our sacrifice, and is our advocate with the Father, we may rest assured, that he will plead our cause for us, and the merit of his own sufferings, in bar of that sentence which strict justice would pass upon us.

3. And lastly, this shews what reason the ministers of Christ have to be earnest and importunate with sinners, to repent and turn to God, to believe and obey the gospel of Christ, that they may have him their friend, who will certainly be their Judge. This inference the Apostle makes from this doctrine, in the words immediately after the text, *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;* we who are employed by Christ, to warn sinners of the danger and terror of a future judgment, who are ambassadors sent from this great King and Judge of the world, to treat with sinners, and to offer peace to them, and in Christ's stead to beseech them to be reconciled to God, as the Apostle speaks in the latter part of this chapter. So that if we ourselves believe what we preach to others, to be the word and law of him who shall shortly judge us, and them that hear us, can we forbear with all possible importunity to solicit their repentance, and to warn them to flee from the wrath which is to come? Can we let them sleep in their sins, when we see them neglect so great a happiness, and run themselves upon so intolerable a misery? If we believe that holy book out of which we preach, and the discoveries and revelation there made, we may take an easy prospect of another world, and see *the wrath of God revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* For the gospel hath made a more particular and clear discovery to us of the state of the next world, and the proceedings of the great day, than ever the world was acquainted with before. It tells us who is the person that shall sit in judgment upon us, even Jesus Christ, *whereof God hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Now, if we know this, and be assured of it, we cannot but deal plainly with sinners, and out of tender pity and

compaſſion to them, endeavour to make them ſenſible of the ſad iſſue and event of a wicked life, and that without repentance and amendment, they will not be able to ſtand in the judgment of the great day. When we ſee men in the high-way to ruin and deſtruction, and the evil day making haſte towards them, we cannot but warn them of that ſad fate which hangs over them, and endeavour, by all means, to reſcue them from that extreme and endleſs miſery, which is ready to overtake them.

Conſider then, ſinner, whom it is thou now rejecteſt and deſpiſeſt, and whoſe laws thou caſteſt behind thy back. It is he who, for all his mean appearance in the world, is the Lord of glory, into whoſe hand the Father hath committed all judgment. And can there be a greater madneſs, than to provoke and make him thine enemy, who ſhall be thy judge? than to deſpiſe him, who can deſtroy thee? He appeared once as a lamb to take away the ſins of the world; but if, through our obſtinacy and impenitency, we render this appearance of his ineffectual for our recovery, he will appear a ſecond time in a more terrible manner, as a lion to tear us in pieces. He came once as a light into the world, in a ſtill and gentle way, to convince and convert ſinners; but if we reſiſt this light, he will come *in flaming fire to take vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the goſpel of his Son.*

And this is that which will make us ſpeechleſs and fill our faces with everlaſting confuſion, at the ſecond coming of Chriſt, that we have fruſtrated and made void the end of his firſt coming. What ſhall we be able to ſay to him when he comes to judge us, who rejected him when he came to ſave us? with what reaſon can we hope that he will deliver us from hell, when we would not be ſaved by him *from our ſins, and redeemed from our vain converſation?*

I will conclude all with that merciful warning which the Judge himſelf hath given us, and left upon record, Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. *Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares. For as a ſnare ſhall it come on all them that*

that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

SERMON CLXXX.

Of the persons who are to be judged.

2 Cor. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The third sermon on this text.

I Proceed to the second proposition contained in the words, *viz.* That all men are liable to this judgment, and that no man that ever lived in the world, except our blessed Saviour the Judge himself, shall be exempted from it. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.*

I shall first endeavour to illustrate and confirm the truth of this proposition; and then apply it to ourselves.

First, For the confirmation of it. This I shall endeavour to do from express testimonies of scripture; and then by arguments drawn from reason and scripture together.

I. I shall endeavour to confirm the truth of this point from express testimonies of scripture. And we find that the scripture useth words of the greatest latitude and extent, to express this matter more emphatically to us. Gen. xviii. 25. God is called *the Judge of all the earth. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Matth. xxv. 32. it is said, that *when Christ shall sit upon the throne of his glory, all nations shall be gathered before him.* Acts x. 42. he is said to be *ordained of God to be Judge of quick and dead.* And so likewise, 1 Pet. iv. 5. *Who*

shall give an account to him, who is ready to judge the quick and the dead. This expression is purposely used to take in all persons that have ever lived in the world; not only those that shall be already dead at the coming of Christ but those that shall be found alive at his coming, who, though they shall not die, yet they shall undergo a sudden and equivalent change, as St. Paul tells us from particular revelation, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. *Behold I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep;* that is, we shall not all die, and sleep in the grave, *but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, (for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed;)* that is, they that are already dead shall be then raised, and their corruptible bodies changed into incorruptible; and they that shall be found alive, tho' they shall not die, yet their bodies shall undergo the same change with those that are raised. And this is the reason why Christ is often in scripture called, *The Judge of quick and dead.*

But, to proceed to other texts. Acts xvii. 31. *He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.* The world, that is, all men that ever lived in it. *He commands all men, every where, to repent,* because he will judge all men. Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12. *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; for it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.* Heb. ix. 27. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after this the judgment.* That is, as death shall pass upon all men, or a change equivalent to it, so after death the judgment shall pass upon the same persons, Heb. xii. 23. *And to God the Judge of all,* 1 Pet. i. 17. *If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man according to his works.*

And to express this the more fully, the scripture reckons up the several ranks and conditions of men, to shew that none shall be exempted. Rev. vi. 15, 16, 17. where you have a representation of the day of judgment, and several sorts of men in vain endeavouring to hide themselves from it, and escape it: *And the kings of the earth,*

by thy words thou shalt be condemned. By which saying, our Saviour designedly confutes an opinion, too current among many, that men's words signify little, and that no account will be taken of them at the day of judgment; that God will not be so severe as to make them matter of charge and accusation, and to punish us for them in the other world; and therefore to obviate this mistake, he purposely adds, *for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* And therefore men must not think, that all their lewd and filthy talk, all their rash oaths and imprecations, all their atheistical discourse, and prophane jests upon religion and the holy scriptures, all their calumnies and slanders of good men, all their officious lies to serve a present turn and occasion, will pass for nothing at the judgment of the great day. No, the judge himself hath expressly told us, that of all such *words men shall give an account in the day of judgment.* And St. Jude tells us, out of an ancient prophecy of Enoch, *that the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly,* not only *of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed,* but likewise *of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

Our most secret thoughts and actions also, as well as our open and publick deeds, shall then be brought upon the stage, Eccles. xii. 14. *For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Rom. ii. 16. *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.* And this likewise is the meaning of that proverbial speech so often used by our Saviour, *there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.* There is nothing so secret, which shall not be disclosed and made manifest in that great day of revelation, and be laid open in the face of the whole world; especially the cunning, dissimulation, and hypocrisy of men with God and men. Men are apt to think themselves safe enough, if they can but escape the eye of men, and commit their sins secretly, and in the dark. But this is either direct atheism, or downright folly; because the eye of God is continually upon

us, and *the darkneſs hideth not from him, but the night ſhineth as the day; the darkneſs and the light are both alike to him.* And if we be always under the inſpection of our judge, if all that we think, and ſay, and do, be *open and naked to the eye of him, πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος, to whom we muſt give an account,* what will it profit us to diſſemble before men, and to conceal any of our actions from them? nay, if we could hide them from ourſelves, (as we cannot our wilful and deliberate ſins) yet that would be of no advantage to us, becauſe *God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.*

And then likewiſe we muſt be accountable to God for all the neglects and omiſſions of our duty, as well as for the poſitive commiſſion of ſin, and that in proportion to the advantages and opportunities we have had of doing more and greater good. So our Saviour tells us, that *unto whomſoever much is given, of him much ſhall be required,* Luke xii. 48. Many are apt to think, that if they do but abſtain from notorious and ſcandalous vices, if they do no body harm, though they do not ſerve God ſo fervently and conſtantly as others do, though they ſeldom think of him and pray to him, though they have no manner of activity or concernment to do good, either to the bodies or ſouls of men; yet that this negative virtue will ſerve their turn at the day of judgment. But the matter is quite otherwiſe, as our Saviour hath moſt expreſly declared. *A good tree,* ſaith he, *will bring forth good fruit.* And by the parable of the fooliſh virgins, who for want of oil in their lamps were ſhut out of the kingdom of God, he declares to us the dangerous ſtate of thoſe who ſlumber away their lives in a drowſy inactivity, and are not careful either to keep alive grace in their hearts, or to ſhew forth the light of good works in their converſation. And in the parable of the talents, Matth. xxv. he paſſeth a moſt ſevere ſentence upon that *ſlothful ſervant, who hid his Lord's talent in a napkin, and buried it in the earth,* without making any manner of improvement of it; ver. 30. *Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into utter darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* And in the ſame chapter, where our Saviour repreſents to us the proceedings of the great day, the charge there drawn up againſt them, conſiſts of ſins of omiſſion, and groſs

groſs neglects to do the good which they had the ability and opportunity to do, ver. 41, 42, 43, &c. *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirſty, and ye gave me no drink; a ſtranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye cloathed me not; ſick and in priſon, and ye viſited me not.* Not that ſins of commiſſion ſhall then be paſt by, and left out of the account; it is taken for ganted, that they ſhall be reckoned for in the firſt place: but the wiſdom of our Saviour chuſeth to inſtance in thoſe ſins, which many hope they ſhall not be called to account for, the omiſſions and neglects of their duty, that he might hereby root out of the minds of men effectually that falſe opinion which they are ſo apt to entertain concerning ſuch ſins, as if they were of a very light and venial nature.

II. This is evident likewiſe from reaſon; becauſe all the actions of reaſonable creatures, as ſuch, are under the regulation and government of law, by which, as by a rule, every thing that we do is to be meaſured. And we have all the reaſon that can be to expect, that he who gave us this law, will look to the obſervance of it, and take an account of all breaches and tranſgreſſions of it, ſo as to reward thoſe that keep it, and to puniſh the bold tranſgreſſors of it; and if this were not ſo, the law would want its proper ſanction and enforcement, and had been given to no purpoſe.

And this law of God reacheth all our actions, inward and outward, religious and civil, ſecret and open, poſitive and negative, with all the circumſtances of commendation or aggravation that belong to them. And as this law is the rule of all human actions now, and by which we ought to live in this world; ſo it will be the rule by which we and all our actions ſhall be examined and judged in the next. The judgment of God will be of the ſame extent with his law.

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, illuſtrated and confirmed the truth of this propoſition, that all the actions which men have done in this life, ſhall come to account in the next, and they ſhall be judged for them.

And if ſo, then certainly no conſideration that can be preſented to the mind of man, ought in reaſon to be more

more powerful to beget in us a ſtrict care and conſcience of all our thoughts, words and actions, than this, that after a little while, when a few days or years are over, all that we ever did in this world, ſhall be ſtrictly examined and looked into, and be approved or condemned by the impartial judgment of God. And therefore, if we have any grain of true wiſdom in us, any love to ourſelves, any ſenſe of our great and everlaſting intereſt, that great day of account ſhould always be before us, and preſent to our minds, and we ſhould govern every action of our lives with a ſerious and awful regard to it. And if we be conſcious to ourſelves, that there is any way of wickedneſs in us, that we have been groſly culpable in the violation of any known law of God, or in the neglect of any part of our duty, how can we without dread think of coming to ſo ſevere an account, and falling under ſo heavy a ſentence, as will then be pronounced upon the workers of iniquity?

Indeed, if we could do any thing now, of which we were to give no account hereafter, and which would not be taken into conſideration at the great day, we then might be ſecure and careleſs as to ſuch actions: but when nothing we do is exempted from the judgment of God, when we are aſſured beyond all doubt, that he will one day take cognizance of every thought, word and action; how circumſpect ſhould we be, *what manner of perſons we are in all holy converſation and godlineſs!* How nearly does it concern us *to take heed to our ways, leſt at any time we offend: to keep our hearts with all diligence, and to ſet a watch to the door of our lips!* that we may not think or ſpeak any thing in the ſight or hearing of our judge, by which we may incur his cenſure and condemnation. This is the conſideration which the wiſe man propoſes to us, as of all other the moſt likely to awe men to the careful obedience and obſervance of God's laws. *Fear God, and keep his commandments; for God will bring every work into judgment, and every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Can we be negligent of our lives and actions, when we conſider that all the paſſages of our lives are upon record, and that there is a moſt exact regiſter kept of them,

ceiving his trial there, and having judgment past upon him, according as upon his trial his cause shall appear to be. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* No person whatever, of what condition soever, shall be exempted from it.

All that now remains is to apply this to ourselves, and that in these following particulars:

I. From what has been said, we learn that this doctrine of a future judgment equally concerns every one of us, and ought in reason to have the like influence upon us; because we are all of us, without difference or exception, equally liable to the judgment of God; not one of us, of what age or quality, or condition soever, shall be exempted from it. Whoever thou art, how great, or rich, or powerful soever, though never so big and considerable among men, thou shalt not escape the judgment of God. It may be thou art a prince, and bearest rule over others: but thou also art liable to the judgment of God; and therefore oughtest to remember, that *they that rule over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God*, and of that great account which they must one day give of that high charge committed to them. It may be now thou judgest others, and canst call them before thy bar, and make them tremble, having power and authority to absolve or condemn them; but remember that for all this thou must come into judgment thyself, and give an account how thou hast judged others, and whether thou hast sat and proceeded in these inferior courts, as one mindful of the high tribunal of God, and with a just sense of the judgment of the great day, when all the causes which thou hast tried here upon earth, will be reviewed and severely scanned in that higher court, from which there can be no appeal.

It may be thou art rich and powerful, and one of those great flies that can break through the cobwebs of human laws, and escape the judgment of them: But the judgment of God will take fast hold of thee, and in despite of all thy interest and might, will take a severe revenge upon thee. As powerful as thou art, thou art but a man, and God is infinitely too strong for thee; thou

thou canſt not eſcape out of his hands. Thinkeſt thou, O man, that thou ſhalt eſcape the judgment of God? ſays the Apoſtle, looking upon it as a fooliſh and abſurd imagination, for any man to think, that he can, by any means, avoid the judgment of God.

So that, ſo long as we are men, whatever elſe we are, we ought to ſtand in awe of the judgment of the great day; becauſe, let our rank and condition be what it will, we are all equally obnoxious to that, and can, upon no account whatſoever, plead any priviledge or exemption from it.

II. The conſideration of this confounds all thoſe differences and diſtinctions of men, which make ſuch a noiſe in this world; and whatever they may ſignify in this world, makes them very inconſiderable as to the other. Why then ſhould men be puffed up, and look ſo big upon account of any of theſe things, when there is a day not far off, and which will certainly and for ought we know ſhortly overtake us, which will level men in all theſe reſpects, and ſet them upon even ground, before an impartial bar, where none of theſe things will be had in any conſideration, and where the fooliſh pride and arrogance of men ſhall be confounded; and thoſe who were wont to look down with ſo much ſcorn upon others, as ſo infinitely below them, ſhall find themſelves upon an equal level with the pooreſt and moſt abject part of mankind, and ſhall be ready to ſay with the wiſe man in the wiſdom of Solomon, chap. v. 8. *What hath pride profited us, or what hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All theſe things are paſſed away as a ſhadow, and as a poſt that haſteth by.* So that we ought to uſe well all thoſe advantages which we have above others in this world; if we do not, they will be of no uſe and benefit to us in the other. Riches profit not in the day of wrath.

All theſe petty civil differences and diſcriminations of high and low, rich and poor, honourable and baſe, they only hold in this world, and are in vogue on this ſide the grave: But when we come into the other world, they will all ceaſe and ſignify nothing. There the powerful oppreſſor can do nothing to the injury of the pooreſt man that ever lived in this world, and as little to his own ſafety and ſecurity. All that power and intereſt

terest which is now so considerable, and makes its way every where, and does what it pleaseth, will be of no use and significancy in the other world. The great and the mighty, when death hath once arrested them, and bound them over to the judgment of the great day, their glory and strength departs from them, and they are then but like other men. Job elegantly describes the state of men after death, Job iii. 17, 18, 19. *There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master.* While we are upon the stage of this world, we sustain several persons; one is a Prince and a great man, another is a Captain and a mighty man; and whilst this life lasts, these differences are considerable. But when we retire and go off the stage, we shall then be undressed, we shall be stripped of all our titles, and of all our glory, and go out of the world as naked as we came into it. Death and judgment level all mankind, and when we come to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, we shall all stand upon equal terms. For God respects not the persons of the mighty in judgment, he will shew no reverence to the great ones of this world, but will deal impartially and alike with all. Matth. xxv. 32. You may there see how the Judge himself represents the universality and impartiality of his dealings with men in that day: *Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.* All mankind shall then be gathered into one common flock, among which there shall no other distinction be made, but of sheep and goats, the separation which shall then be made, shall not be of the high from the low, of the rich from the poor, of the honourable from the base, of the learned from the ignorant; there shall be but one distinction then made, of the good from the bad, and the righteous from the wicked; there shall no consideration be then had, but only of the moral differences of men; all civil difference will then vanish and be of no account in that day, either to exempt any man from that judgment, or to gain any favour and respect to him in the hearing or de-

decision of his cause. This should make all men very modest and humble in this world, to consider how they shall be levelled in the next.

III. How should the consideration of this dash all our sensual mirth and jollity, and put a damp upon our spirits, when they are too light and vainly transported with the pleasures and delights of this world! If a man be to prepare himself to be tried for his life after a few days, how will he look about him, with what care and seriousness will he provide for so solemn an occasion, and neglect nothing that may stand him in stead, and help to bring him off when he shall receive his trial? The thoughts of this will spoil all his mirth, and turn the lightness of his spirit into sober sadness. Much more ought the consideration of a judgment infinitely more terrible, and in the consequence of it, of far greater concernment to us, to compose our minds into a serious frame. For, if we believe a future and general judgment, and that none of us can by any means possibly escape it, then certainly it highly concerns every one of us to be serious, and to pass the time of his life in a perpetual awe of it. So that St. Peter argues from this consideration, 1 Pet. i. 17. *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* This thought should interpose itself in all our mirth, that *we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.* And therefore Solomon admonisheth young men, in the midst of their sports and pleasures, to think of a future account, Eccles. xi. 9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: But know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

IV. And lastly, From hence we learn, that the business of religion does equally concern every man. For, if we must all be judged, we are all concerned to prepare and provide for it: And a religious and virtuous life is the only preparation for it. How should we order our lives with a respect to this great and general assize, when every one of us shall be brought upon his trial, and stand at the bar of God to be judged by him! Many live as if they thought the business of religion below them, and not

not at all appertaining to them: but if the judgment of God will equally reach all persons, then I am sure it equally concerns all to mind religion, and a holy and virtuous life; for that alone will make us worthy, as our Saviour himself expresseth it, *to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man.*

And this is the result of Solomon's enquiry, and of this long discourse upon that argument, what is the great work and business, the great interest and concernment of men in this life; which we find in the conclusion of his sermon, called, *the book of the preacher*, Eccl. xii. 13. 14. *Let us*, says he, *hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man.* Religion is the great business and concernment of men in this world, because *God will bring* every man, and *every work into judgment, whether it be good or evil.*

SERMON CLXXXI.

Of the actions for which men will be accountable.

2 Cor. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The fourth sermon on this text.

I Proceed to the third proposition contained in these words, *viz.* that all the actions which men have done in this life shall then come to account, and men shall be judged for them. *That every man may receive the things done in the body,* τὰ ἴδια τῷ σώματι, *the things proper and due to the body,* so some very good copies have it: and then the meaning will

be, that every one may receive the reward due to him; the word body, by a frequent Hebraism, being put for the person: as if he had said, *the reward due to himself*, according to the actions he hath done in this life, good or bad. But in most copies it is, τὰ διὰ τῦ σώματος, *the things done in, or by the body*, as our translation renders it, that every one may receive a reward of the actions which he hath done in this life; and then this phrase doth import what it is that shall be the matter of our account at the day of judgment, *viz. The things done in the body*; that is, all the actions of this life, while we are in this world, in this state of union of the soul and body.

Whether there be any peculiar emphasis in this phrase, τὰ διὰ τῦ σώματος, *the things done by, or in the body*, as if it did exclude those things which shall be done after death, in the state of separation of our souls from our bodies, from being accounted for at the resurrection in the day of judgment; I say, whether there be any such emphasis in those words, *the things done in the body*, I cannot certainly affirm; though, according to the nature and reason of the thing it seems very probable, as the Schoolmen have generally determined in this case, that *meritum est viatoris*, "merit and demerit are pro-"per to this state of trial;" and that wicked men, when they are in *termino*, and their state is finally concluded, and the trial of their obedience is at an end, do not demerit by their sins, nor increase their punishment. For although that hatred and enmity of God which is in the damned spirits, be a monstrous irregularity in a creature, yet it cannot well in reason be otherwise, but that a creature which is extremely miserable, and withal desperate, and past all hopes of remedy and recovery out of that dismal state; I say, it cannot well in reason be otherwise expected, but that a creature in such a condition should rage against the author of its torment and punishment, and do all the despite to him that he can, and wish that he were not, though it be in vain to wish so; and it seems probable that God will not bring this to a new account, because it seems so natural and necessary a consequent of a miserable and desperate state: but though all this be probable, I am far from being peremptory

lory in it, much le's am I confident that it is the meaning of this phrafe here in the text; and I do not love to build an opinion upon a fingle and doubtful phrafe of fcripture. I only mention it by the by, not intending to infift upon it, being much of his mind, who faid, *Non amo nimis argutam theologiam*, "I am no lover of great fubtilty and "nicety in divinity."

It is fufficient to my purpofe, that this phrafe, of every man's receiving the things done in the body, does at leaft import thus much, that we fhall be accountable at the day of judgment, for all the actions that we have done in this life, and receive the due recompence and reward of them; which is the propofition I intend as briefly as I can to illuftrate and confirm. And,

Firft, For the illuftration of this point, I fhall inftance in the feveral heads of action, as they take their difference and variety from the principle, or matter, or object, or other circumftances of them. We muft render an account to this great Judge for our inward as well as outward actions; for the acts of our minds, and every thought fpringing up there, efpecially if it be cherifhed and entertained by us, for all our fecret defigns, purpofes and intentions, as well as for the words which we fpeak, and the outward actions which we do: Whatever we have thought and defigned, fpoken and declared, accomplifhed and done, will then be confidered and examined, and we fhall be judged for it. We muft likewife give an account of all our civil as well as religious actions, of our behaviour toward men in all our dealing and intercourfe with them, as well as of our demeanour toward God in the duties of his more immediate worfhip and fervice. The neglects and omiffions of our duty in any kind will alfo come under confideration, as well as our commiffions of evil. A ftrict account likewife will be exacted of all the talents which God hath entrufted us with, of all the abilities, opportunities and advantages we ever had of doing fervice to God, and good to men, and whether we have made anfwerable improvements of them, for the glory of God, and the benefit and advantage of men.

We muft be accountable likewife for words and actions of lefs moment and confequence, as well as for thofe

of greater weight and concernment; for those which were done in secret, and in the greatest darkness and privacy, as well as for those which were done in publick, and in the open view and light of the world; for the good and evil which hath been done by ourselves, and in our own persons, and for what hath been done by others by our command and countenance, and from the influence of our counsel and persuasion, or example, or which we have been any ways accessary to hinder or promote; and lastly, for the manner and circumstances of our actions, as well as for the matter and substance of them; all these will be surveyed and strictly searched into, and weighed in an exact balance, that we may receive a reward or punishment proportionable to them.

Secondly, For the confirmation of this I shall make it evident both from scripture and reason.

1. From scripture; which in general tells us, that *God will bring every work into judgment;* and that in order thereto, God strictly observes and takes notice of what we do; *that his eyes are upon the ways of man, and that he seeth all his goings; that there is no darkness or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*, Job xxxiv. 21, 22. *That the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*, Prov. v. 21. *That he knoweth our paths and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. That there is not a word in our tongue, but he knoweth it altogether, and that he understands even our thoughts afar off*, Psal. cxxxix. 2, 3, 4. That all the actions of men are recorded in books, which shall be produced and opened at the great day, *and the dead, both small and great, shall be judged from those things which shall be written in those books*, Rev. xx. 12.

And more particularly the scripture tells us, that those words and actions of men which seem most inconsiderable, and are most likely to be exempted, shall be accounted for, and severely scanned, and weighed. Matth. xii. 36, 37. says our Lord there, *I say unto you, that every idle word*, by which if our Saviour do not mean every unprofitable, to be sure every *wicked word, that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by*

by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned. By which ſaying, our Saviour deſignedly confutes an opinion, too current among many, that men's words ſignify little, and that no account will be taken of them at the day of judgment; that God will not be ſo ſevere as to make them matter of charge and accuſation, and to puniſh us for them in the other world; and therefore to obviate this miſtake, he purpoſely adds, *for by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.* And therefore men muſt not think, that all their lewd and filthy talk, all their raſh oaths and imprecations, all their atheiſtical diſcourſe, and prophane jeſts upon religion and the holy ſcriptures, all their calumnies and ſlanders of good men, all their officious lies to ſerve a preſent turn and occaſion, will paſs for nothing at the judgment of the great day. No, the judge himſelf hath expreſly told us, that of all ſuch *words men ſhall give an account in the day of judgment.* And St. Jude tells us, out of an ancient prophecy of Enoch, *that the Lord ſhall come with ten thouſands of his ſaints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly,* not only *of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed,* but likewiſe *of all their hard ſpeeches which ungodly ſinners have ſpoken againſt him.*

Our moſt ſecret thoughts and actions alſo, as well as our open and publick deeds, ſhall then be brought upon the ſtage, Eccleſ. xii. 14. *For God will bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Rom. ii. 16. *In the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt according to my goſpel.* And this likewiſe is the meaning of that proverbial ſpeech ſo often uſed by our Saviour, *there is nothing covered that ſhall not be revealed; neither hid, that ſhall not be known.* There is nothing ſo ſecret, which ſhall not be diſcloſed and made manifeſt in that great day of revelation, and be laid open in the face of the whole world; eſpecially the cunning, diſſimulation, and hypocriſy of men with God and men. Men are apt to think themſelves ſafe enough, if they can but eſcape the eye of men, and commit their ſins ſecretly, and in the dark. But this is either direct atheiſm, or downright folly; becauſe the eye of God is continually upon

us, and *the darkneſs hideth not from him, but the night ſhineth as the day; the darkneſs and the light are both alike to him.* And if we be always under the inſpection of our judge, if all that we think, and ſay, and do, be *open and naked to the eye of him,* πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος, *to whom we muſt give an account,* what will it profit us to diſſemble before men, and to conceal any of our actions from them? nay, if we could hide them from ourſelves, (as we cannot our wilful and deliberate ſins) yet that would be of no advantage to us, becauſe *God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.*

And then likewiſe we muſt be accountable to God for all the neglects and omiſſions of our duty, as well as for the poſitive commiſſion of ſin, and that in proportion to the advantages and opportunities we have had of doing more and greater good. So our Saviour tells us, that *unto whomſoever much is given, of him much ſhall be required,* Luke xii. 48. Many are apt to think, that if they do but abſtain from notorious and ſcandalous vices, if they do no body harm, though they do not ſerve God ſo fervently and conſtantly as others do, though they ſeldom think of him and pray to him, though they have no manner of activity or concernment to do good, either to the bodies or ſouls of men; yet that this negative virtue will ſerve their turn at the day of judgment. But the matter is quite otherwiſe, as our Saviour hath moſt expreſly declared. *A good tree,* ſaith he, *will bring forth good fruit.* And by the parable of the fooliſh virgins, who for want of oil in their lamps were ſhut out of the kingdom of God, he declares to us the dangerous ſtate of thoſe who ſlumber away their lives in a drowſy inactivity, and are not careful either to keep alive grace in their hearts, or to ſhew forth the light of good works in their converſation. And in the parable of the talents, Matth. xxv. he paſſeth a moſt ſevere ſentence upon that *ſlothful ſervant, who hid his Lord's talent in a napkin, and buried it in the earth,* without making any manner of improvement of it; ver. 30. *Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into utter darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* And in the ſame chapter, where our Saviour repreſents to us the proceedings of the great day, the charge there drawn up againſt them, conſiſts of ſins of omiſſion, and groſs

groſs neglects to do the good which they had the ability and opportunity to do, ver. 41, 42, 43, *&c. Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirſty, and ye gave me no drink, a ſtranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye cloathed me not; ſick and in priſon, and ye viſited me not.* Not that ſins of commiſſion ſhall then be paſt by, and left out of the account; it is taken for ganted, that they ſhall be reckoned for in the firſt place: but the wiſdom of our Saviour chuſeth to inſtance in thoſe ſins, which many hope they ſhall not be called to account for, the omiſſions and neglects of their duty, that he might hereby root out of the minds of men effectually that falſe opinion which they are ſo apt to entertain concerning ſuch ſins, as if they were of a very light and venial nature.

II. This is evident likewiſe from reaſon; becauſe all the actions of reaſonable creatures, as ſuch, are under the regulation and government of law, by which, as by a rule, every thing that we do is to be meaſured. And we have all the reaſon that can be to expect, that he who gave us this law, will look to the obſervance of it, and take an account of all breaches and tranſgreſſions of it, ſo as to reward thoſe that keep it, and to puniſh the bold tranſgreſſors of it; and if this were not ſo, the law would want its proper ſanction and enforcement, and had been given to no purpoſe.

And this law of God reacheth all our actions, inward and outward, religious and civil, ſecret and open, poſitive and negative, with all the circumſtances of commendation or aggravation that belong to them. And as this law is the rule of all human actions now, and by which we ought to live in this world; ſo it will be the rule by which we and all our actions ſhall be examined and judged in the next. The judgment of God will be of the ſame extent with his law.

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, illuſtrated and confirmed the truth of this propoſition, that all the actions which men have done in this life, ſhall come to account in the next, and they ſhall be judged for them.

And if ſo, then certainly no conſideration that can be preſented to the mind of man, ought in reaſon to be more

more powerful to beget in us a ſtrict care and conſcience of all our thoughts, words and actions, than this, that after a little while, when a few days or years are over, all that we ever did in this world, ſhall be ſtrictly examined and looked into, and be approved or condemned by the impartial judgment of God. And therefore, if we have any grain of true wiſdom in us, any love to ourſelves, any ſenſe of our great and everlaſting intereſt, that great day of account ſhould always be before us, and preſent to our minds, and we ſhould govern every action of our lives with a ſerious and awful regard to it. And if we be conſcious to ourſelves, that there is any way of wickedneſs in us, that we have been groſly culpable in the violation of any known law of God, or in the neglect of any part of our duty, how can we without dread think of coming to ſo ſevere an account, and falling under ſo heavy a ſentence, as will then be pronounced upon the workers of iniquity?

Indeed, if we could do any thing now, of which we were to give no account hereafter, and which would not be taken into conſideration at the great day, we then might be ſecure and careleſs as to ſuch actions: but when nothing we do is exempted from the judgment of God, when we are aſſured beyond all doubt, that he will one day take cognizance of every thought, word and action; how circumſpect ſhould we be, *what manner of perſons we are in all holy converſation and godlineſs!* How nearly does it concern us *to take heed to our ways, leſt at any time we offend: to keep our hearts with all diligence, and to ſet a watch to the door of our lips!* that we may not think or ſpeak any thing in the ſight or hearing of our judge, by which we may incur his cenſure and condemnation. This is the conſideration which the wiſe man propoſes to us, as of all other the moſt likely to awe men to the careful obedience and obſervance of God's laws. *Fear God, and keep his commandments; for God will bring every work into judgment, and every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Can we be negligent of our lives and actions, when we conſider that all the paſſages of our lives are upon record, and that there is a moſt exact regiſter kept of them,

them, written in indelible characters with *a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond?* as that expreſſion is, jer. xvii. 1. *I remember all their wickedneſs, and their doings are before me,* ſays God, Hoſ. vii. 2. and chap. viii. 7. *The Lord hath ſworn by the excellency of Jacob, ſurely I will not forget any of their works.* We ſin, and forget that we have ſinned; but God chargeth himſelf with the remembrance of all our evil doings, and they can never ſlip out of his mind.

Did men ſeriouſly believe theſe things, and were they affected with them as they ought, they could not but have a wonderful effect upon their lives, to make us more watchful over our ways, and to tread every ſtep of our lives more warily. We could not commit iniquity with ſo much greedineſs and pleaſure, and *ruſh into ſin, as the horſe ruſheth into battle,* without any fear or conſideration, were we verily perſuaded, that every evil action that we do in this life, will be matter of charge and acculation in the day of judgment.

Therefore when we are doing any thing, we ſhould ask ourſelves, will not this alſo come into judgment when we are engaged in any wicked deſign, or vitious courſe, we ſhould conſider, with what face will this act of violence and oppreſſion, of fraud and cozenage, of filthy lewdneſs and brutiſh intemperance, appear at the great day? How will it look, when *God ſhall ariſe to judgment?* When we are careleſs and remiſs, ſlight and ſuperficial in the ſervice of God and the duties of his worſhip, we ſhould remember that God takes notice of all this, and we muſt give an account to him for the manner, as well as the matter our actions.

If the actions of our lives were tranſient, and the conſequence of them were over ſo ſoon as they are done, and no memorial of them would remain hereafter; if they would die with us, and never riſe up in judgment againſt us; we needed not to take ſuch heed to them: But we do all things for eternity, and every action of this life will have a good or bad influence upon our everlaſting ſtate.

More particularly, the conſideration of this ſhould have an influence upon us, more eſpecially to theſe purpoſes:

1. To

1. To make us afraid of leſſer ſins, as well as greater, becauſe thoſe alſo, as well as theſe, will come into judgment; and we ſhould not eſteem any thing little, which God ſhall think fit to take into conſideration, and to bring upon the ſtage at the great day.

2. The conſideration of this ſhould likewiſe deter us from ſecret ſins. We are apt to think, that if we can but ſin in ſecret, and hide what we do from the eyes of men, we are ſecure and ſafe enough: But alas! our great danger is not from men, but God; not now, but hereafter. We are now very ſolicitous to conceal our wickedneſs, that we may avoid ſhame, and eſcape puniſhment from men: but God will one day produce all our ſecret ſins, and bring them forth into the light, for all our ſtudious concealment of them now. Now we are afraid of the eye of men, and therefore chuſe ſecrecy, that we may commit our ſins privately and unſeen. Vain man! the day is at hand, when all thy ſecret lewdneſs and fraud will be brought upon the publick ſtage of the world, and be matter of publick infamy to thee, and an everlaſting reproach that can never be wiped off; and though thou now *covereſt thy tranſgreſſion as Adam, and hideſt thine iniquity in thy boſom;* yet the time is coming, when all thy ſecret wickedneſs ſhall be expoſed to the view of angels and men; and then, ſinner, what wilt thou do, when thou ſhalt appear before this all-ſeeing Judge? none of thine arts of concealment will then ſtand thee in ſtead. Canſt thou hide thy ſins from his eye, ſo that he cannot ſearch them out? or thyſelf from his wrath? If thou canſt not, what matters it to hide any ſecret from others, when all is known to thy Judge?

3. This ſhould likewiſe diſpoſe us to great ſincerity in all our words and actions, and make us always to ſpeak as we think, to perform what we promiſe and profeſs, and in all things to be what we would ſeem to be, ſince there is a day coming when *the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed*, and every mask of hypocriſy and diſſimulation ſhall be plucked off, and our moſt cloſe and cunning deſigns ſhall be brought into the open light. In that great day of revelation, nothing will be matter of comfort and rejoicing to us, but *the teſtimony*

of

of our conſciences, that in all ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, we have had our converſation in the world.

4. This ſhould make us faithfully to improve all the talents and opportunities which God affords to us: becauſe we are but ſtewards, and muſt give an account of them. We are apt to covet great wealth, and to aſpire after great places and power; but do we conſider what it is that we ſo eagerly deſire and purſue? All this will but bring upon us the burden of a greater and heavier account, if we do not improve theſe talents and advantages to the end for which they were given, to relieve the wants of the poor and miſerable, and to ſerve the great ends of religion and virtue; and if we fail herein, a dreadful account will be exacted of us, and we ſhall wiſh that we had been the pooreſt and meaneſt, the moſt ignorant and unlearned perſons in the world.

5 This ſhould reſtrain us from uncharitable cenſures of others. *Thou art therefore inexcuſable, O man, whoſoever thou art that judgeſt another: for thinkeſt thou, that thou ſhalt eſcape the judgment of God?* as the Apoſtle reaſons, Rom. ii 1.

6. This may help to ſupport us under the unjuſt cenſures and reproaches of men. If we be innocent, God will one day *bring forth our righteouſneſs as the light, and our judgment as the noon day. With me*, ſaith St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 3. *it is a very ſmall thing that I ſhould be judged of you, or of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord.* it is deſirable to approve ourſelves and our actions to men: but if we cannot, it is a great ſatisfaction to approve them to our own conſciences, and to God who is *greater than our hearts, and knows all things.*

Laſtly, This will teach us not to meaſure our condition by the good opinion which others have of us; but by the law of God, which will be the ſtandard and meaſure of our judgment. He will conſider every thing exactly, and weigh all the circumſtances of our caſe, and make all the allowances that equity requires. Men can but judge according to appearance: but the judgment of God will be according to truth; therefore we ſhould above all *labour to be accepted of him in that day.*

SER-

SERMON CLXXXII.

Of the sentence to be passed at the day of judgment.

2 Cor. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The fifth sermon on this text.

I Proceed to the fourth and last proposition contained in the text, *viz.* that at the day of judgment, sentence shall be past upon men according to the nature and quality of their actions done in this world, whether good or evil. The reward of happiness or misery, which men shall be sentenced to at that day, shall bear a proportion to the good or evil which they have done in this life.

In the prosecution of this argument, I shall enquire into these two things.

First, What proportion the rewards of the next world shall bear to the actions of men in this life.

Secondly, The grounds and reasons of it. And then make some application of this truth to the consciences of men.

First, What proportion the rewards of the next world shall bear to the actions of men in this life. I mean, whether the rewards of the next life shall only be proportioned to the kind and quality of our actions considered in general, as good or evil; that is, that good men shall be rewarded with everlasting glory and happiness, and wicked men with eternal punishment and torment: or whether the degrees of these rewards shall likewise bear a proportion to the degrees of the good or evil of our actions, so that a more eminent degree of piety and holiness

holineſs ſhall have a proportionable ſhare of glory and happineſs; and greater and more hainous ſins ſhall be loaded with greater and heavier puniſhments.

I. It is clear, and out of all controverſy, that men ſhall be rewarded according to the quality and kind of their actions; good ſhall be rewarded to the good, and evil to the evil. And this is the conſtant tenor of the Bible. Pſal. i. 6. *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous;* that is, doth approve it, and will reward it; *but the way of the ungodly ſhall periſh;* which is of the ſame importance with the expreſſion in the verſe before, *the wicked ſhall not ſtand in the judgment.* Iſa. iii. 10, 11. *Say ye to the righteous, it ſhall be well with them, for they ſhall eat of the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, for it ſhall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands ſhall be given him;* which, if it be meant of the rewards and puniſhments of this life, is much more conſtantly and univerſally true of the other. Mat. xvi. 27. *The Son of Man ſhall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels with him, and ſhall reward every man according to his works.* Rev. xxii. 12. *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according as his work ſhall be;* that is, whether good or evil. Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of ſin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life:* that is, *to thoſe who have their fruit unto holineſs,* as he had ſaid immediately before. Hither likewiſe belong thoſe innumerable texts, in which glory, and happineſs, and eternal life, are promiſed to thoſe who live *ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world;* and wickedneſs and diſobedience are threatned with dreadful and eternal puniſhment. But I ſhall only take notice of two or three of the moſt remarkable of them. Mat. xiii. 40, 41, 42. *The Son of Man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire, there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth. Then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father.* But this is moſt fully repreſented in that particular deſcription, which our Lord himſelf makes of the proceſs of that day, Mat. xxv. 34. where the ſentence that ſhall be paſſed on the righteous is this, *Come, ye bleſ-*

sed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. And on the wicked, ver. 41. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* And ver. 46. *And these,* speaking of the wicked, *shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* John v. 28, 29. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9. speaking of *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who,* says the Apostle, *shall render to every man according to his works; to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but to them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil.*

II. That the rewards and recompences of the next world shall likewise bear a proportion to the degrees of good or evil which we have done in this life, though it hath been controverted, seems also to be sufficiently clear from scripture. And to this purpose, I shall,

1. Produce such texts as will fully prove it. And,

2. Answer the grounds of the contrary opinion.

1. The scripture doth plainly assert, that the rewards of the next life will bear a proportion, not only to the kind and quality of our actions, but to the degree of them; that good men shall receive a reward proportionable to the degree of their holiness and obedience, of their service and sufferings for God; and that the torments of the wicked shall be greater or less, according to the degree and aggravation of their sins.

(1.) As for good men; that the reward that shall be bestowed upon them, shall bear a proportion to the degree of their service and sufferings for God. This seems to be intimated in those metaphorical expressions used by the prophet Daniel, Chap. xii. 3. *They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* Which is much the same with what St Paul expressly affirms, concerning the different glory of the saints

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at the reſurrection: 1 Cor. xv. 41. *There is one glory of the ſun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the ſtars: for one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory. So alſo is the reſurrection of the dead.* Mat. v. 10, 11, *Bleſſed are ye, when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt you for my name's ſake: rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.* Which words, if they do not ſignify a more glorious reward to thoſe who ſuffer perſecution for Chriſt, have no emphaſis or encouragement in them. For what cauſe of *exceeding joy and gladneſs* is it, to be perſecuted and ſuffer for Chriſt, if a peculiar reward did not belong to thoſe who ſuffer for him? If there do not, then thoſe who ſuffer for Chriſt, are plainly in a worſe condition in this world, than other good men who eſcape theſe ſufferings; and yet are in no better condition than others in the next world: and then why ſhould any man be glad to ſuffer? Mat. x. 41, 42. *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, ſhall receive a righteous man's reward.* Where you ſee a difference intimated between *the reward of a prophet, and a righteous man*, namely, that a prophet ſhall have a greater reward than an ordinary good man. Mat. xix. 28, 29. where our bleſſed Saviour tells us, that all that denied themſelves for Chriſt, *ſhall inherit everlaſting life;* but for his diſciples, who were continually attendants upon him, and ſufferers for him, that a more eminent degree of glory ſhould be conferred on them; which is expreſſed by their *ſitting upon twelve thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Iſrael* But moſt plainly in the parable of the talents, where every man's reward is according to the improvement of his talents. *He that had gained five talents, is made ruler over five cities; and he that had gained ten talents, ruler over ten cities,* Luke xix. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* But if our reward ſhould not hold a proportion to the degree of our ſervice, it would be in vain to be *abundant in the work of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal*

weight of glory; that is, our affliction contributes to our glory, and adds to the degree of it. 2 Cor. ix. 6. The Apostle useth this as an argument to persuade the Corinthians to be very liberal and bountiful to their distressed brethren, because according to the degree of their charity, would be the degree of their reward. *This I say, he that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully:* than which I cannot imagine any thing can be spoken more plainly to this purpose. And the same argument he useth to the Philippians to stir them up to charity, Phil. iv. 17. *Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account:* clearly implying, that the more good we do in this world, the more abundant shall be our reward in the next.

(2.) It is likewise as plain from scripture, that the punishment and torment of wicked men will be abated or increased proportionably to the degree and aggravation of their sins. Upon this account our Saviour threatens those who continue impenitent under the gospel with more heavy and dreadful punishments, and tells us, that *in the day of judgment* their condition shall be far worse than theirs of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, Mat. xi. 20, 21. And Mat. xxiv. 51. he threatens that servant, who, because *his Lord delayed his coming*, presumed so much upon the patience of God, with a more severe punishment: *The Lord of that servant shall cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites*; intimating that the punishment of hypocrites will be very severe, and, as it were, the standard of the highest punishment. And so likewise, Luke xii. 47, 48. our Saviour tells us, that according to the degree of light and knowledge which men sin against, shall be the degree of their torment. *The servant that knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself to do according to it, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.* And in general he tells us, that the punishment of sinners takes its aggravation from the advantages and opportunities which men have neglected. *For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much*

much shall be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. So likewise the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us, that God will vindicate the contempt of the gospel more severely than of the law of Moses, Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4. *If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* And chap. x. 28, 29. *He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?*

So that it seems very evident from scripture, that the degree of happiness or misery, which men shall be sentenced to in the next world, shall be correspondent to the degree of good or evil, which they have done in this world: And I can hardly imagine any thing more clear. But it seems the school-men, and other divines who have been at leisure to tie knots, and to make objections against the plainest truths, have called this also into question. And therefore I shall, in the

2*d* Place, briefly examine the grounds of the contrary opinion; which, though they do but immediately strike at the degrees of glory and happiness, yet, by a parity of reason and consequence, they likewise overthrow the degrees of punishment; and they are these two:

1. They say that the merits of Christ, by which eternal life and happiness is purchased for us, are equal to all those who have any interest in them, and are of value sufficient to purchase the highest degree of glory for them; and the meritorious cause being the same, there is no reason to imagine any difference of degrees in the effect.

Answ. The weakness of this objection, how specious soever it may appear, will be evident to any one that considers, that eternal life and happiness doth not accrue to us by way of necessary and natural result from the merit of Christ's obedience and sufferings, but of voluntary compact and agreement, and therefore is only available so far as it pleased God the Father and him that it should be. Now the scripture hath declared, that *Christ is the*

author of eternal salvation to them that believe and obey him: but it hath declared likewise, that according to the degrees of our holiness and obedience, shall be the degrees of our happiness, because the happiness which Christ hath purchased for us, is not bestowed upon us, but upon certain terms and conditions to be performed on our part, upon the performance whereof, and the degree of that performance, the degrees of our happiness do depend.

II. The other objection is from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, Matth. xx. where it is said, that *they that came in at the last hour received as much as they that came in at the first, and had born the heat and burden of the day, every one his penny.* For answer to this, it is a known rule among divines, that *Theologia parabolica non est argumentativa;* by which they mean, that we cannot argue in divinity from every circumstance of a parable, but only from the main scope of it. Now this parable seems plainly directed against the envious Jews, who murmured because the Gentiles were to partake of the blessing of the Messias, and that they who were called in the last age of the world, should share in this benefit, as well as the antient people of God; so that by the murmurers, the Jews are designed, who were offended that salvation should come to the Gentiles. And then the scope of the parable is not, that all good men shall have equal degrees of glory; but that the Gentiles, which were called long after the Jews, should be saved as well as they. I proceed to the

Second thing I proposed to enquire into, *viz.* The grounds and reasons of this, why the rewards which shall be distributed at the day of judgment, shall bear a proportion to the good or evil which men have done in this life? And,

1. That they shall be correspondent to the nature and quality of our actions, the justice and equity of the divine providence doth plainly require. For justice is to give to every one that which of due belongs to him: now of equity it belongs to them that do well, that it should go well with them; and to the evil, that it should be ill with them; that every one should *receive the fruit of his doings.* Not that we can strictly merit any thing

thing at the hand of God. It is godneſs to reward an innocent creature, and it is goodneſs to reward the good actions of thoſe who have been ſinners; but juſtice requires that good and bad men ſhould not fare alike. Thus Abraham reaſons from the juſtice of God, *that the righteous ſhould be as the wicked, that be far from thee; ſhall not the Judge of all the world do right?* And conſidering the promiſes which the goodneſs of God hath made freely to good men, for their encouragement in goodneſs, the performance of theſe promiſes is founded in the righteouſneſs and faithfulneſs of God.

2. That the rewards of the next life ſhould bear a proportion to the degree of the good or evil done by us in this life, is clearly founded in the equity and reaſonableneſs of the thing; it being very much for the encouragement of holineſs and goodneſs, to be aſſured that whatever we do for God now, will be fully conſidered and rewarded hereafter; that he will take notice of the leaſt ſervice that we do for him, and that every degree of grace and holineſs ſhall be crowned with an anſwerable degree of glory and happineſs. And ſo, on the other hand, it tends very much to diſcountenance ſin, and to keep men from running to the height of impiety, to conſider that every ſin will aggravate their miſery, and that every degree of wickedneſs will add to the weight of their torment; and that though they be *children of wrath* already, yet by adding *iniquity to tranſgreſſion*, they may cauſe the *wrath of God and his jealouſy to ſmoke againſt them*, and bring more curſes upon themſelves, and make themſelves *ten times more the children of wrath.*

And indeed in the nature of the thing, it cannot be otherwiſe, but that the better and more holy any man is, the more capable he ſhould be of happineſs, and the more diſpoſed for the enjoyment of God; and the more wicked any man is, the more he ſhould exaſperate his own conſcience, and awaken thoſe furies which rage in his breaſt. *He treaſures up more wrath againſt the day of wrath*, and piles up more fuel for everlaſting burnings. The torments of hell are in ſcripture compared to fire; now the more fuel and greater ſtore of combuſt-

combustible matter is cast into it, the more fierce and raging it must be.

I have done with the explication, and shall now apply what hath been delivered.

I. If sentence shall be passed at the great day according to the good or bad actions of men, this shews us what should be the great care of every man in this life; to attend to the nature and quality of our actions, and to observe that difference between them in our practice now, which our judge will certainly make in the sentence which he will pass upon them at the great day. And yet so blind and mistaken is the greatest part of the world, that they make this the least part of their care and business. Men are generally very solicitous to be rich and great, and to be in a healthful and prosperous condition, and do with all possible care seek to avoid sickness, and poverty, and meanness; but how few are concerned to be virtuous and good, and to avoid wickedness and vice! and yet these moral differences of men at the day of judgment will only be taken into consideration: other things will not *profit us in the day of wrath.* God in that day will not proceed with men according to their outward quality and condition in this life; their eternal estate shall not then be decided according to their wealth or poverty, their height and meanness in this world: It will not then be enquired, what office a man bore, what titles of honour, what manors or lordships he was owner of; but how he hath behaved himself in those circumstances, what use he hath made of his wealth and power, what good or evil he hath done, whether he hath glorified God, and served the great ends of his creation; whether he hath obeyed or disobeyed the truth; whether he hath lived in *ungodliness and worldly lusts, or soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world:* In a word, whether we have been righteous or wicked. This will be the great enquiry at that day; and these qualities, according as they are found with us, will determine our condition for ever.

II The consideration of this may comfort good men under the promiscuous dispensations of God's providence in this world. Now *all things generally happen alike, and there is the same event to the righteous and to the*

the wicked: but things will not be always thus. Have but a little patience, and the juſtice of God's providence, which is now under a cloud, will clear up; the day is coming, which will make a wide and vaſt difference between good and bad men, *between thoſe that ſerve God, and thoſe that ſerve him not; thoſe that ſwear, and thoſe that fear an oath;* between the lewd and the chaſte, the ſober and debauched, the meek of the earth and the murderers; between the proud and the humble, the juſt and the oppreſſors: between thoſe that perſecute, and thoſe who are perſecuted for righteouſneſs.

Now the difference is frequently on the wrong ſide; good men ſuffer and are afflicted, the wicked flouriſh and are proſperous: but *go into the ſanctuary of God, and there thou ſhalt ſee their end.* Let us but look a little before us, beyond *the things which are ſeen and are but temporal, unto the things which are not ſeen and are eternal,* and we ſhall ſee all things ſtraight; that *the end of the wicked,* who flouriſhed in this world, *is to be deſtroyed for ever;* and that *the righteous,* who were ſo diſtreſſed and afflicted in this world, *ſhall enter into reſt and joy: When the days of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord, theſe ſhall be comforted, and the other tormented.*

III. If the reward of the next life ſhall bear a proportion to the degrees of good or evil, which we have done in this world, then on the one hand here is matter of great comfort and encouragement to us in the ways of holineſs and obedience. This is a mighty argument to good men *to grow in grace, and to preſs forward* toward perfection, *to be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord, becauſe they know that their labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord;* but that according to the degrees of our ſervice and obedience, of our virtue and goodneſs, ſhall be the degree of our glory and happineſs. We ſerve a good maſter, who will conſider every thing that we do for him; *who is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love,* and will not let the leaſt ſervice paſs unrewarded. Let us not then content ourſelves with any low degree of goodneſs; but be continually aſpiring after the higheſt perfection we are capable of. Since we have ſuch a prize in our view, *let us*

run

run with patience, and with all our might, *the race which is ſet before us*. For by the ſame reaſon that any man deſires happineſs, he cannot but deſire the higheſt degrees of it that are attainable; and will conſequently endeavour to make himſelf capable of the greateſt degree of glory: and though no degree of holineſs can merit everlaſting life and happineſs, yet greater degrees of holineſs will certainly be rewarded with a larger portion of happineſs. God is not bound antecedently to his promiſe, to give ſo great a reward to any man for his works; yet he hath promiſed to reward every man according to them.

So that there is no reaſon why a good man, when he is once come to this, that by the grace and aſſiſtance of God, he can refrain from groſs ſins, and reſiſt the temptations to them, and perform the great duties of religion, why he ſhould with Eſau, ſit down and ſay, *I have enough*, I have ſo much as will carry me to heaven, and I deſire no more. It is a ſad preſage of apoſtaſy, to ſtand ſtill in religion. He that once ſtops, the next thing is to look back. This is the remedy which St. Peter preſcribes againſt apoſtaſy, 2 Pet. iii. 18. *Take heed, leſt ye fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs*; and then it follows, *but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*. The beſt remedy againſt apoſtaſy, is growth in goodneſs. It is a rule in policy, that an ambitious man ſhould never ſtay at any ſtep of preferment, till he come at the top, becauſe it is ſome ſecurity to be in motion. Our aſcent to heaven is ſteep and narrow, and we are ſafeſt when we do not ſtand ſtill: temptation cannot ſo well take its aim at us.

Let us therefore preſs after the higheſt degree of virtue and holineſs, and labour to be as good as we can in this world, that in the next our happineſs may be the greater: that when the day of recompence ſhall come, we may receive an ample reward, and *God the righteous judge* may ſet a bright and glorious crown upon our heads.

We ought likewiſe to conſider, that if any man can be content only to be ſaved, and deſire no more but juſt to get to heaven, that ſuch a degree of holineſs and virtue,

tue, as will ſave a man that can attain no more, will perhaps not ſave that man who lazily reſts in the loweſt degree, and deſires no more. To be *leaſt in the kingdom of God*, is next to be being ſhut out of it. It is not to be expected that God ſhould beſtow heaven and happineſs upon thoſe who are ſo indifferent about it, as to deſire heaven for no other reaſon, but becauſe they would not go to hell. Men muſt not think to drive ſo near and hard a bargain, in ſo deſirable and advantageous a purchaſe.

And then, on the other hand, it is matter of great terror to great ſinners. *The wages of* every *ſin is death*, eternal death; and every degree of hell and damnation is dreadful: but there are ſins more hainous in themſelves, and ſome that are attended with heavier aggravations in ſome perſons; theſe do inflame hell, and heat that furnace ſeven times hotter. There are ſome moderate ſinners in compariſon; theſe ſhall have a moderate doom, and a cooler hell; but there are others who are extravagant and enormous ſinners, that drink up iniquity, as the ox drinks up water; that let themſelves looſe to commit all wickedneſs with greedineſs; ſuch as ſin above the common rate of men, with full conſent, and upon deliberation, with great deſign and contrivance, in deſpite of the cleareſt convictions, of the beſt counſels and reproofs; theſe make haſte to ruin, and take hell by violence. Now ſuch mighty tranſgreſſors ſhall be mightily tormented; they ſhall not be puniſhed at the common rate of ſinners, their conſciences will breed more and ſharper ſtings, and wilder furies to torment them, and they ſhall ſink into a deeper miſery.

More particularly this concerns us Chriſtians, who continue impenitent, and live in our ſins, notwithſtanding the clear revelation of the goſpel, and the wrath of God revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men; notwithſtanding life and immortality ſo clearly brought to light by the goſpel. *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?* What condemnation will be heavy enough for thoſe, who wilfully refuſe to be ſaved? *This is the condemnation*, ſays our Saviour, *that light is come into the world, and men*

men love darkness rather than light. All the sins which we now commit, are infinitely aggravated above the sins of thousands in the world, who never enjoyed that light, and those advantages and opportunities which we have done. *The ignorance of these God winked at, but now* he expects, *he commands all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.* What stripes do we deserve, who have *known our master's will, but have not prepared ourselves to do according to it?* All that light and knowledge which we have, all those counsels and instructions which we have read and heard out of God's word, will inflame our account, and heighten our condemnation, and the very means of our salvation will be the saddest aggravation of our ruin. What our Saviour said of the impenitent and unbelieving Jews, holds as well concerning impenitent Christians; *that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for them. But beloved, I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.* Let us but remember, and seriously consider that *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether good or evil;* and this will certainly have a mighty awe and influence upon our lives, and all the actions of them. *Now the God of peace*, &c.

SER.

SERMON CLXXXIII.

The uncertainty of the day of judgment, considered and improved.

MARK xiii. 32, 33.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the Angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.

THese words are spoken by our Saviour of the day of judgment; for tho', in this chapter, as likewise in the xxivth of St. Matthew, and the xxiſt of St. Luke, which are paraliel to it, our Saviour discourseth very particularly and largely concerning the eminent appearance of his power and justice in the destruction of Jerusalem, which may perhaps sometimes in scripture be called his coming; yet it is plain likewise, that he discourseth there concerning his coming to judgment at the end of the world. For we find in the xxivth of St. Matthew, that after our Saviour had foretold his disciples of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, they came afterwards to him, to enquire more particularly about it; ver. 3. *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be! and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* Where there are two several questions, to which our Saviour returns a distinct answer. The first, when those things he had been speaking of before should be? that is, the things which related to the destruction of Jerusalem, for of that only he had been speaking before. The other question was, concerning the sign of his coming, and of the end of the world.

The reason of their joining these two questions together, seems to be this, (as is very probable from many

texts of the new teſtament) *viz.* that the Apoſtles did think (and our Saviour permitted them for a long time to remain under this miſtake) that the end of the world, and the general judgment, would be preſently after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

Now to this ſecond queſtion of theirs, concerning the end of the world, and our Saviour's coming to judgment, he gives an anſwer in the latter part of that chapter, ver. 29. *But immediately after the tribulation of theſe days, the ſun ſhall be darkened, and the moon ſhall not give her light; and then ſhall appear the ſign of the Son of Man in heaven.* Not that the general judgment of the world was immediately to follow the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; for there were many other things to intervene, as is manifeſt from St. Luke, chap. xxi. 24. *That the Jews ſhould be led captive into all nations, and Jeruſalem ſhould be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.* And though theſe things be expreſſed in a few words, yet they comprehend a long tract of time; for the captivity of the Jews hath continued for above 1600 years, and is not yet at an end. And then after the accompliſhment of theſe things, it follows, that there ſhall be ſigns in the ſun and the moon, and then they ſhall ſee the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And then he tells them in concluſion, that theſe things ſhould begin to come to paſs, that is, ſome of them ſhould happen, before the end of that generation; and ſo they did, for the deſtruction of Jeruſalem was about forty years after. But when the end of all ſhould be, that is, when the day of judgment would happen, he could not tell them the preciſe time, ver. 36. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father only;* and it is added in St. Mark, *neither the Son.*

Now by that day and hour, is meant that famous and terrible time of the general judgment of the world, which St. Peter calls, by way of eminency, the day of the Lord, 2 Peter iii. 10. *The day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night;* that is, it will ſurprize men ſuddenly and unexpectedly, becauſe no man can tell when it will be; it will ſteal upon the world, as a thief does into a houſe by night. *But of that day and hour knoweth*

knoweth no man, no not the Angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.

Having thus cleared all difficulties concerning the general meaning of the text, that it is to be understood of the day of judgment, and not as some learned men have thought, of the destruction of Jerusalem; I shall now consider the words more particularly, and they contain in them these two things.

First, The uncertainty of the day of judgment, as to us, and all other creatures. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the Angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

Secondly, That the consideration of the uncertainty of the time, should make us very careful to be always prepared for it. *Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* I shall speak as briefly as I can to both these.

First, Our Saviour here declares the uncertainty of the time, as to us, and all creatures, when the general judgment shall be. And to express this the more emphatically, he tells us,

1. That God only knows it. Of that day and hour, οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, εἰ μὴ ὁ Πατήρ, none knows, but the Father. For though we translate it, no man, yet in the Greek it is more general, none knows but the Father, that is, God only. For the word Father is several times in the New Testament not used personally, in way of distinction from the Son, and the holy Ghost; but signifies the Deity, the Father being *Fons & principium deitatis*, "the fountain "and principle of the Deity."

Of that day and hour; the word ὥρα is not here to be taken strictly for the measure of time, commonly called an hour; this were to make our Saviour's expression very flat, after he had denied that the day is known, to deny that they know the hour: for if they do not know the day, much less the hour. Now in these kind of speeches, the expression ought to rise, and that which is most emphatical ought to be said in the last place; so that it should rather have been, they know not the hour, no, nor the day; but ὥρα here does undoubtedly signify the appointed season or time; and so the four seasons of the

year are by the Greeks called ὥρα; and in this ſenſe the word is moſt certainly uſed by the Evangeliſt St. John chap. vii. 30. *But no man laid hands upon him,* ſpeaking of Chriſt, *becauſe his hour was not yet come,* that is, the time appointed for his ſuffering; and that which in the text is called hour, is in the next verſe called καιρὸς, which ſignifies a particular ſeaſon, or appointed time. Ye know not when the time is, that is, the time which God hath particularly deſigned and appointed for this great work of judging the world.

2. He excludes from the knowledge of it, thoſe who were moſt likely to know it, if God had not abſolutely reſerved it to himſelf. Of that day and hour knows none, no, not the Angels, neither the Son.

(1.) Not the Angels, which are in heaven; though they be creatures of ſo perfect a knowledge, though they be the miniſters of God, and do continually attend upon him, and behold his face, and underſtand much more of the works of God, and his providence in regard to the affairs of the world, than we that live here below in ſo much error and ignorance, that dwell in houſes of clay, whoſe foundations are in the duſt: yet the particular time, when God will judge the world, he hath reſerved as a ſecret to himſelf, and not communicated it ſo much as to the Angels, who are deſigned to wait upon the great Judge of the world, and to make up his train in that ſolemnity. So our Saviour tells us, Mat. xxv. 31. *That the Son of Man ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him.* And ſo likewiſe the Apoſtle, 2 Theſſ. i. 7. *That the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty Angels.*

But this is not only hid from the Angels, but which is yet more, from the Son himſelf. Of that day and hour knows none, no not the Angels which are in heaven, neither the Son. This ſeems ſtrange indeed, that the Son of God, who came from the boſom of his Father, and therefore is more likely than any to know his ſecrets, that he whom God had ordained to be the Judge of the world, into whoſe hands he had committed that great truſt and authority, ſhould not be acquainted with the time of this judgment: Nay, that he, in whom

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are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in whom the divinity does substantially reside, should not know this time, this seems incredible, but that he himself hath told us so. It was indeed a common saying among the Jews, that the time of the end of the world was revealed to none: But yet, one would think, the Son were always excepted. Nay, how can it well be otherwise, if we believe him to be God? and indeed the fathers, in their disputes with the Arians, have mightily puzzled themselves about this text.

Some, and those of no small account, have understood these words, as if our Saviour only intended to put off his disciples from a more particular enquiry about this matter; not that he was ignorant of the day of judgment, but that he did not know it, so as to reveal it to them; which is by no means to be admitted, not only because it looks too like the equivocation of the Jesuits, but likewise because the same may be said of the Angels: since it is no otherwise denied of the Angels, that they know this time, than it is of the Son. Others say, that his human nature was not ignorant of the day of judgment, but that it did not know this of itself, but by virtue of its union with the divine nature. But our Saviour absolutely says, that the Son did not know it. And therefore others more reasonably have distinguished between his human nature and divine, and though as God he could not be ignorant of any thing, yet his human understanding did not know it. And it is not unreasonable to suppose, that the divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour, did communicate itself to his human soul according to his pleasure; and so his human nature might at some times not know some things. And if this be not admitted, how can we understand that passage concerning our Saviour, Luke, ii. 52. *That Jesus grew in wisdom and stature;* or as the word ἡλικία may more fitly be translated, in age, and in favour with God and man? For if the human nature of Christ did necessarily know all things by virtue of its union with the divinity, he could not then, as man, be said to grow in wisdom.

And this I think may be sufficient for the clearing of this difficulty, concerning the Son's not knowing the

Particular time which God had appointed for judging the world. And if he did not know it, it is surely no reflection upon his disciples, if they were ignorant of it, or mistaken about it. Their infallibility was only in things that were revealed to them, but cannot be imagined to extend to things not revealed. And thus I have done with the first thing, namely, the uncertainty of the time of the general judgment, as to all but God only. Of that day and hour knoweth none, no not the Angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. I proceed now to the

Second Thing, which I mainly intended, *viz.* that the consideration of the uncertainty of the time should make us very careful to be always prepared for it. *Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* In which words we have,

First, A general caution; take ye heed. Look to it, that ye be not surprized and overtaken by that time. The time being so uncertain, they were always in danger.

Secondly, More particular directions how they should demean themselves in this case. And our Saviour directs to two things, vigilancy and prayer; *watch and pray.*

Thirdly, There is a reason added to enforce this care and diligence, from the uncertainty of the time as to us: For ye know not when the time is.

From whence I shall observe by the way, the great goodness of God to us, and his singular care of us. That as he is gracious and merciful to us, in giving us the knowledge of those things which are necessary and useful for us to know; so no less in keeping us ignorant of other things, which are not only not necessary for us to know, but which it would be very much to our harm and prejudice, to have the knowledge of them communicated to us. God hath acquainted us with whatever is necessary to direct and excite us to our duty; but he hath purposely concealed from us those things, which might tend to make us slothful and careless, negligent and remiss in it. He hath not acquainted us with the secrets of his decrees and providence; but hath reserved these in his own power; because it would be really to

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our disadvantage to have the knowledge of them. If we knew all events before hand, and how and when all things would happen, we should be too much concerned about some things, and too little about others; and therefore God hath, in great wisdom and goodness, afforded us the knowledge of those things which are most proper and useful for us, whereby we may be instructed in our duty, and encouraged and stirred up to it. Job xxviii. 28. *Unto man he saith, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding.* This is the knowledge which is fit for us, and which no man is destitute of, but by his own fault, and gross neglect of himself.

So that God is very good to us, both in revealing some things to us, and in hiding other things from us; particularly those things which we are speaking of, concerning the time of the end of the world, and the judgment of the great day. Which did men certainly know to be so far off, as it really was in our Saviour's time, and may perhaps now be, it would very much abate the force and awe of it upon the minds of men; for then men would think themselves safe till death should remove them out of the world. But when, for any thing we know, the general judgment of the world may overtake us the next moment; this consideration gives a great deal of weight to all the rest, and is apt to strike a particular terror into men. What man would not be afraid to offend, if he did not know but that the next moment he should be brought to his trial, before a severe and impartial Judge? So that for this reason, God hath in great kindness to us concealed this matter from us, and like a wise and good father, instead of gratifying our curiosity, hath consulted our real benefit and advantage.

Besides this, that it is always useful to the world to be kept in awe by the continual danger and terror of an approaching judgment, there seems to have been a more particular reason why our Saviour would have the disciples and first Christians ignorant of this thing; for which reason he discoursed so to them concerning it, as that they might rather apprehend, that the end of all things was at hand, and might probably happen in their time.

time. And thus it seems his disciples understood his speech concerning St. John, as if he should not die till our Lord came to judgment. And the Apostles in several of their exhortations seem to urge Christians from this very consideration, of the nearness of the general judgment. So St. Paul, Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known to all men; the Lord is at hand.* And the author to the Hebrews, chap. x. 25. encourageth Christians to constancy in their profession upon the same account, *Not forsaking the assembling yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, because the day approacheth.* So likewise St. James, chap. v. 9. *Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: Behold the Judge standeth at the door.* And St. Peter tells us, that several impious men scoffed at them upon this account, as if the Apostles had been deceivers in this matter, and therefore said, where is the promise of his coming? as it were upbraiding them, for putting men in a vain expectation of it.

And it was no inconvenience at all, that the Apostles and first Christians had this apprehension of the nearness of that time; for no consideration could be more forcible to keep them stedfast in their profession, and to fortify them against sufferings, than a persuasion of the approach of that day, wherein those who suffered for Christ should be so gloriously rewarded; and those who for fear of suffering fell off from him, should be so terribly punished. And nothing could be more proper and powerful, to wean their affections from the love of this world, and to make them willing to part with any thing in it, than to apprehend that there would shortly be an end of it, and then all the enjoyments of it would signify nothing. So that their ignorance in this matter was, by the providence of God, admirably fitted for the animating and encouraging of Christians to a great zeal and constancy in the profession of their faith, and in the propagating of it, as thinking they had but a little while to do this great work in.

And it will be in all ages to the end of the world, a good argument to men to vigilancy and constant preparation; because if they be remiss and careless, the great

great Judge of the world may come in a day that they think not of, and at an hour when they are not aware. But to return to the particulars I propounded to ſpeak to from the words.

Firſt, Here is a general caution, *take ye heed*; look heedfully to it, that ye be not ſurprized and overtaken by that time: for being uncertain when it will happen, ye are always in danger. But becauſe this general caution is only premiſed by our Saviour, to make way for the more particular directions, therefore I ſhall not inſiſt upon this, but in the ſecond place proceed to them. And they are theſe two, *watch and pray*.

I. Vigilancy, which is a large duty, and comprehends under it the whole care of a Chriſtian life; all that watchfulneſs and preparation which we ought to uſe, that we be not ſurpriſed by that terrible day, that we be not found in ſuch a condition, as ſlothful and negligent ſervants uſed to be in when their Lord comes ſuddenly upon them, and finds all things in confuſion and diſorder. And to this our Saviour alludes ſeveral times in his exhortations to watchfulneſs: Luke xii. 35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye yourſelves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Bleſſed are thoſe ſervants, whom the Lord when he comes ſhall find watching.* And ver. 40. *Be ye therefore ready alſo; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* So that this watchfulneſs implies a continual care of our lives and actions, that we be always in ſuch a poſture as we would be willing the great Judge of the world ſhould take us in, doing thoſe things which we ſhould not be aſhamed to own, if he ſhould come ſuddenly upon us, and ſummon us before his tribunal, and avoiding thoſe things, which would be matter of ſhame and confuſion to us at his appearance. Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. Where our Saviour giveth this caution, he inſtanceth in ſome particular ſins, which are more directly contrary to this vigilance; as intemperance, and an inordinate love and care about earthly things. *Take heed to yourſelves, leſt your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares: for as a ſnare ſhall it come on all that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch*

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ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

It would be a large work to descend to all particulars, whereby we should express our care and vigilance. I shall mention but a few, but such as will comprehend most others under them.

1. We should resolve without delay, to put ourselves into that state and condition, in which we may not be afraid judgment should find us. It is to be feared, that a great part of mankind are in that loose and negligent posture, in the time of their health and prosperity, in which if the great Judge of the world should surprize them and bring them to a speedy trial, it would go ill with them; their case would be sad and deporable beyond all imagination, infinitely sadder than of a malefactor standing before an earthly Judge, guilty of great and notorious crimes, and continually expecting the sentence of death to be passed upon him. Such is the condition of all impenitent sinners, who have lived careless and dissolute lives, without any serious consideration of their future state, or preparation for it; who have in the general course of their lives neglected God and religion, and a great many necessary and essential parts of their duty, and have indulged themselves, either in a continual course of impiety, and wickedness, or of sensual pleasures and vanity. What shall become of those whom the judge of the world shall find in this condition, either actually wicked, or wretchedly secure?

Nay, those who do in some measure and degree mind religion, how few of them live under *the powers of the world to come, have their loins girded about, and their lamps burning*; and are habitually so prepared, as if they were in a continual expectation of the coming of their Lord? So that in the secure and negligent posture that most men live, even the better sort of men, if judgment should overtake them, how few could be saved? For this cause *God is long-suffering to men, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* And if he should not by his merciful providence awaken many men to consideration and care of themselves, and by some great affliction, or long sick-

ſickneſs, put men upon ſerious thoughts, and give them the ſpace and opportunity to recollect themſelves, to make up their accounts, and ſo make their peace with God, and to put themſelves into a better poſture for another world, than they uſually are in the time of their health and proſperity; it is very much to be feared, that the greateſt part of thoſe who are tolerably good would be deſtroyed in their ſecurity.

But this patience of God will not always laſt; but *the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*, and will ſurprize the careleſs world all at once, and give them no time *to trim up their lamps, and to get oil*, if they be not provided already; but in an inſtant the door will be ſhut againſt them, and they ſhall never enter into the kingdom of God. This day hath not yet happened; but it will certainly come, and, as our Saviour ſays, *will come as a ſnare upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. And bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord when he comes ſhall find ready.*

So that our firſt care muſt be, to get out of this dangerous ſtate of ſin and ſecurity, *to break off our ſins by repentance*, that we may be capable of the mercy of God, and at peace with him, before he comes to execute judgment upon the world: for till this be done, we are every moment in danger; and if death or judgment ſhould overtake us in this impenitent ſtate, we are loſt beyond recovery.

2. After this great work of repentance is over, we ſhould be very careful how we contract any new guilt, by returning to our former ſins, or by the groſs neglect of any part of our duty. A true and ſincere repentance will put us into a ſafe condition: but then we muſt take heed that we do not repent of our repentance, and bring ourſelves into danger again, by ſtarting aſide from thoſe good reſolutions which we had ſo ſolemnly taken up. For every deliberate and preſumptuous ſin that we are guilty of after our repentance, does endanger our ſtate, and ſhake the foundations of our peace: but if we relapſe into our former evil courſe, or after our repentance we allow ourſelves in the habitual practice of any known ſin, either our repentance was inſincere before, or if it were true for the time, we are fallen from it,

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and all that we have done signifies nothing, and we have the whole work to begin again. And if the judgment of God should overtake us, before we have renewed our repentance, and reformed our lives, we should be found in the number of *the ungodly, who cannot stand in judgment*. So that, as it concerns us to make haste out of an impenitent state, so no less to order our conversation afterwards with great vigilancy and care: lest by relapsing into our former sins, and being surprized in them by the judgment of God, we fall into condemnation.

3. Let us neglect no opportunity of doing good, but always be employing ourselves, either in acts of religion and piety towards God, or of righteousness and charity towards men, or in such acts as are subordinate to religion: I mean the works of a lawful calling, in which, if we demean ourselves with diligence and good conscience, we may be said to serve God, and to live in his fear, because we are governed by the rules of religion, all the while we are about our worldly business, and providing for the necessities of this life in an honest and industrious way.

More particularly, we should strictly charge ourselves, according to our estate and opportunities, to be very much in the works of mercy and charity; remembering that our Saviour hath represented this as a special matter of enquiry at the judgment of the great day, how we have acquitted and discharged ourselves in duties of this kind, and that nothing does more immediately qualify us for the mercy of God, when we shall come to stand before his judgment-seat, than to have shewn mercy to our brethren: as on the other hand, the scripture hath terribly threatened, that *he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy*. By these, and all other acts of a good life, we shall be in a constant readiness and preparation for the coming of our Lord. And, oh, what a happiness and comfort will it be to us, to be found by him thus employed! *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing*. I proceed,

4. We should often review our lives, and call ourselves to strict account of our actions, that *judging ourselves*

ſelves, we may not be judged, and condemned, *by the Lord.* This frequent examination of ourſelves will give us to underſtand our errors and miſcarriages; which, if we ſeriouſly conſider, muſt needs prompt us to repentance, and engage us in purpoſes and reſolutions of amendment. And the practice of this is certainly the beſt way to keep our accounts clear, and to prevent that horrible confuſion which we ſhall be in, if judgment ſhould ſurprize us unawares, when we have the guilt of great and manifold ſins unrepented of, lying upon our conſciences like a heavy weight, ready to ſink us into eternal perdition. Beſides, that this ſtrict and frequent examination of our actions will be an excellent means to make us more careful for the future to avoid thoſe faults and miſcarriages which we have obſerved in ourſelves before. We ſhould be aſhamed to fall into thoſe errors again, for which we have ſo lately and ſeverely cenſured and condemned ourſelves.

5. Another part of our preparation for the coming of our Lord, is, an humble truſt and confidence in the virtue of his death and paſſion, as the only meritorious cauſe of the remiſſion of our ſins, and the reward of eternal life. Though we be regenerated and renewed by the Holy Ghoſt, and by the aſſiſtance of God's grace enabled to perform works of righteouſneſs, and, as is ſaid of Zachary and Elizabeth, *to live in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs;* that is, in the general courſe of our lives, to yield a ſincere obedience to the laws of God: yet, becauſe *in many things we offend,* and our beſt righteouſneſs is very imperfect, and falls extremely ſhort of that exact and ſtrict duty, which the laws of God requires; and if it were perfect, our obedience for the future could make no reparation to the juſtice of God for paſt ſins and tranſgreſſions; therefore we cannot hope for our own righteouſneſs to be juſtified and accepted with God, and upon the merit of it to have our ſins pardoned, much leſs to be rewarded with eternal life. God indeed of his infinite mercy is pleaſed, upon our repentance, to pardon our ſins paſt, and upon our ſincere obedience to give us eternal life; and without theſe qualifications we ſhall never be made partakers of theſe bleſſings; except we repent, our ſins ſhall not be forgiven us; and *with-*

out holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. But then it is not for the merit of our repentance and righteouſneſs, that theſe bleſſings are conferred upon us; but for the meritorious obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour: That moſt acceptable ſacrifice of himſelf, which he offered to God in our ſtead, and in our behalf, hath purchaſed and procured theſe beneſits for us; and *we are accepted in his beloved Son, and juſtified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt;* and therefore *not for any works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but of his mercy he ſaves us.* And here we are to fix our hopes of juſtification and ſalvation, *viz.* upon that perfect propitiation and ſatisfaction which Chriſt by the ſacrifice of himſelf once offered hath made for the ſins of the whole world. For the alone merit of this ſacrifice, God is graciouſly pleaſed to forgive us all our ſins, upon our true repentance, and to reward our ſincere, though very imperfect obedience, with eternal life. So that *through faith in the blood of Chriſt*, not by confidence in ourſelves and our own righteouſneſs, *we obtain remiſſion of ſins, and eternal life.* And it is not only in itſelf great arrogance, but great ingratitude to our bleſſed Redeemer, *who gave himſelf for us*, to aſcribe that to the merit of our own righteouſneſs, or the merits of the ſaints, which nothing in heaven or earth, but *the precious blood of Chriſt*, who was a *Lamb without ſpot or blemiſh*, could have purchaſed for us. And it is argument and encouragement enough to holineſs and obedience of life, that without it we cannot ſee God; and by it we are qualified for that happineſs which Chriſt hath purchaſed for us, and as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, are *made meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light.*

6. And *laſtly*, to awaken and maintain this vigilancy and care, we ſhould often repreſent to our minds the judgment of the great day, which will certainly come, though we know not the time of it. And if any conſideration in the world will make men watchful and diligent, certainly this will, that the judgment of God continually hangs over them, and may ſeize upon them at any time; nay, for ought we know, the judgment of God may now be *ſtanding at the door*, and be ready to

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ruſh in upon us, whilſt we are ſo negligent and ſecure. For this day, whenever it ſhall be, will come ſuddenly, and ſurprize the careleſs world, when they leaſt think of it, and look for it. So our Lord himſelf hath foretold, that *as a ſnare it ſhall come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth:* that is, the greateſt part of mankind ſhall be taken unprepared, when they are unprovided for it; nay, when they are generally lulled aſleep in a ſtupid ſecurity and infidelity; when the world is grown atheiſtical, and do hardly believe any ſuch thing as a future judgment. So our Saviour ſeems to intimate, Luke xviii. 8. *When the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith upon earth?* And if this be a mark and token of the general judgment, we have too much cauſe to apprehend that it is drawing on apace: for never was there any age ſince the general flood, that we know of, when *iniquity did ſo abound*, and the infidelity of mankind was ſo full, ſo great, and ſo general; when profaneneſs and atheiſm, the open contempt of God and religion, was ſo raging and violent; and when, as our Lord ſays, there was ſo little *faith to be found on the earth;* whether by faith we underſtand the belief of the principles of religion, or the fidelity of men one towards another. For was there ever any age, wherein falſe accuſation, perjury and ſubornation were more rife and impudent; wherein the reverence of an oath was ſo loſt, and the ſacred obligation of it in ſo little regard among men? So that if the great Judge of the world ſhould delay his coming, human ſociety ſeems ready to disband and diſſolve of itſelf, for want of mutual truſt and confidence among men to hold it together.

And this want of faith, in both ſenſes, we owe in a great meaſure to Popery, which by its artificial ways of falſhood and perjury (which when they have to deal with hereticks, they have upon ſolemn occcaſions declared lawful) hath not only weakened, but even deſtroyed the credit of mankind with one another, as we find of late by ſad experience. And as for infidelity in religion, they have not only given great occaſion to it, by the monſtrous abſurdities they have brought into religion; and by overſtraining the faith of men in ſome parts of it, have

brought them to a disbelief of the whole; as is at this day too visible in many of the most knowing persons of their communion, both in France and Italy: but besides this, they have in their writings, to gain men to a dependence upon, and submission to the infallibility of their church, undermined the foundation of religion, and industriously endeavoured to bring men to scepticism and infidelity; hoping that when they have made men of no religion, they will be fit for theirs, which in too many respects is next to none; and in some worse.

But whether the judgment of the great day be near at hand, or farther off, God alone knows; this is certain, that God hath in great mercy delayed it for a long time, because *he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* And it is no less certain, that it may come at any time, and will come when men least expect it; when the world is in great security, and very little apprehensive of the nearness and danger of it; which is reason and argument enough to continual care and vigilancy: for it may come the next hour, the next moment, for any thing we know to the contrary: and whenever it comes, if we be not prepared, it will be too late to begin that work; if *our lamps be gone out, and we want oil,* we cannot provide ourselves in such a hurry; we shall be full of fear and amazement, but we shall *find no place for repentance,* and a deliberate preparation for our great trial. As the great Judge of the world then finds us, so will he deal with us; such as our state and condition then is, such will be our sentence and doom to all eternity. And is not this argument enough to us to be always upon our guard, always watchful and always ready? because the *Son of man may come at an hour when we think not;* and if we be not then prepared, it will be too late to set about it; the opportunity of doing it, and we ourselves are lost for ever.

This is the first direction our Saviour gives us, continual vigilancy and watchfulness over ourselves in general.

The IId direction is more particular, and that is prayer; *Take ye heed, watch and pray.* And the practice of this

this duty of prayer will be a great advantage to us upon these two accounts,

1. As it tends to awaken and excite our care and diligence in the business of religion.

2. As it is, if sincerely performed, effectual to engage the divine blessing and assistance to second our care and endeavours, and to secure them from miscarriage.

1. It is very apt to awaken and excite our care and diligence in the business of religion. For whenever we heartily beg of God to assist us by his grace, to any thing that is good, we mind ourselves of our own duty: And both reason and scripture will tell us, that we pray to God in vain for his help, if we will do nothing ourselves; that it is gross hypocrisy, and an impudent mocking of God, to implore his grace and assistance, if we be not resolved to put forth our own endeavours. Prayer indeed supposeth that we stand in need of the divine help; but it implies likewise a resolution on our part, to do what we can ourselves; otherwise we *ask in vain*, and have no reason to hope that God will hear our prayers, and grant our requests though never so earnestly and importunately put up to him.

2. If we use our sincere endeavours for the effecting of what we pray for, prayer is the most effectual means to engage the divine blessing and assistance to second our endeavours, and to secure them from miscarriage. And without the aid of God's grace, and his blessing upon our endeavours, they will all be ineffectual, and signify nothing; we shall not be able so much as *to watch one hour*. If God be not with us, *the watchman waketh but in vain: for the way of a man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*. It is necessary therefore, that we continually implore the divine grace, and that we do not rely upon our own strength, and the fickleness and uncertainty of our own resolutions, according to the wise advice of Solomon, Prov. iii. 5, 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Therefore as ever we hope to persevere and continue in a good course, and to order our lives so, as to be in preparation for judgment, let us every day, by continual and fervent prayer, apply our-

ſelves to the fountain of grace and mercy, for his aid and help, to make us vigilant over ourſelves, and all the actions of our lives; to enable us to *a patient continuance in well-doing, to keep us from every evil work, and to preſerve us to his heavenly kingdom.*

And to this purpoſe we have all the encouragement which the aſſurance of the divine goodneſs, and the ſecurity of his never-failing promiſe can give us. It is but aſking and receiving. So St. James tells us, ſpeaking of this heavenly wiſdom to direct us in our Chriſtian courſe, ſo as we may be *perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* Jam. i. 5. *If any of you lack wiſdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him.* I proceed to the

Third and laſt part of the text, which is the reaſon which our Saviour here adds to enforce our care and diligence in a matter of ſo great concernment, *viz.* the uncertainty, as to us, of the particular time when this day of judgment will be: *ye know not when the time is.* Therefore we ſhould always be in expectation of it, always in a readineſs and preparation for it. The certainty of the thing, and that God hath appointed and determined a time in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, though we were ſure this day were far off, ought, in all reaſon, to make us very watchful over ourſelves, and very careful of all our actions, very ſtrict and conſcientious in the diſcharge and performance of every part of our duty. If there were no more but this, that we muſt one day be called to a ſtrict account for all the actions of our lives, and receive the juſt recompence of them, and according to the nature and quality of them be ſentenced to eternal happineſs, or everlaſting miſery; this alone were a mighty argument. So St. Peter reaſons, 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11, 12. *But the day of the Lord will come, in the which the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat; the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up. Seeing then all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs; looking for and haſting unto the coming of the day of God?* that is, making

ſpeedy

ſpeedy preparation for it. The very expectation of this terrible day of the Lord, at how great a diſtance ſoever, ſhould make us diligent, that whenever it ſhall be, we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blameleſs.

But it adds a great deal of awe and force to this argument, to conſider, that for ought we know to the contrary, this judgment may ſurprize us at any time; that this very night we may be awakened by the ſound of that mighty trumpet, which ſhall pierce the ears of all the world, and ſummon the living and the dead to judgment. And God, who is the lover of ſouls, and deſirous to ſave us any ways, by hope and by fear, by his mercies and by his corrections, by our knowledge and by our ignorance, hath purpoſely concealed from us the time of his coming to judgment, to the end we may always be prepared, and that we might continually ſtand in awe of it; and for fear our Lord ſhould come upon us unawares, might always be in a poſture to receive him.

And whatever the ſecure part of mankind may think, who put far from them the evil day, how careleſs and confident ſoever they may be, it would for all that be a terrible thing to them, all on the ſudden, to ſee the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with his mighty Angels; to hear the great trumpet ſound, ſummoning the dead to ariſe and come to judgment; to ſee the whole world in a combuſtion, and the whole frame of nature ready to diſſolve and fall in pieces; *the ſun darkened, and the moon turned into blood, and all the powers of heaven ſhaken, the earth and all the works that are therein, flaming about us;* to ſee the dead ſtarting out of their graves, ſome with great joy, others in a mighty amazement and fright, according to their ſeveral expectations of a happy or fearful doom. What a ſurprize would it be to drouſy and careleſs ſinners, to be thus ſuddenly and unexpectedly overtaken? how will the profane infidel like to find himſelf ſo terribly confuted by his own eyes, and forced to believe that which will make him tremble? It will then be too late for men to think to make their peace with God, and to prepare for judgment. And if there were any time for it,

it, the horror and amazement that sinners will then be in, will hinder them from doing any thing. Thus the scripture represents the fearful case of impenitent sinners, who are thus surprized, as not knowing what to do with themselves, nor whither to fly for safety, as ready to betake themselves any whither for shelter and refuge, as *calling upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*; hereby signifying to us, that sinners shall be in such a consternation, and so deep a despair of the mercy of God towards them, that, instead of addressing themselves to him, they shall turn their supplications to the mountains and rocks, as being more exorable than he.

But this possibly may not be our case; this dreadful day may not come in our days; and yet it is madness to run a venture in a matter of such moment: but if it should not, I must tell you, that the case of a dying sinner is not much different, who hath neglected God and religion in his life-time, and would never think of betaking himself to him, or making any submission, till his justice be ready to cut him off. And how secure and careless soever sinners may be now, no man knows how soon he may be reduced to the very last opportunity of making his peace with God, and may be brought into those sad and miserable straits, that no man that is in his wits would be in for all the world; that he may have nothing that can give him the least hope of being saved from eternal perdition, but a sudden and confused, and in all probability an ineffectual repentance; nothing but this one plank to trust to, which it is ten thousand to one whether it ever bring him to shore.

Therefore be wise, sinner, in time, and seize upon the present opportunities of life, and improve them with all thy might, with all possible care and diligence, lest judgment find thee unprepared; or in case God in mercy to the world, should delay it yet longer, lest death seize upon thee careless and unprovided. And when that is once in view, it is but very little that can be done by way of preparation: for as there is no counsel nor wisdom, no work nor device in the grave, whither-

ther we muſt go; ſo there is very little, when we are come near to it; and therefore, *bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord when he cometh, ſhall find watching.*

SERMON CLXXXIV.

The certainty, and the bleſſedneſs of the reſurrection of true Chriſtians.

1 THESS. iv. 14.

For if we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again; even ſo them alſo which ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him.

THE words which I have read are an argument of the bleſſed reſurrection of good men to eternal life, grounded upon the reſurrection of Chriſt. In the verſe before, the Apoſtle comforts Chriſtians, concerning their brethren that were already departed in the faith of Chriſt, that there was no reaſon why they ſhould ſo immoderately grieve for them. *But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are aſleep, that ye ſorrow not, even as others that have no hope:* that is, as the Heathens do, who mourn for their dead friends in ſo grievous a manner, as if they were utterly extinguiſhed by death, and they had no imagination of any life beyond this. And thus we find the Apoſtle elſewhere deſcribing the ſtate of the Heathen world; Eph. ii. 12. that *they were aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, ſtrangers from the covenant of promiſe, having no hope.*

But Chriſtians ſhould not mourn for their deceaſed friends, as the Heathen were wont to do, who had no hope of a better life; becauſe Chriſtians profeſs to believe that Chriſt is riſen from the dead, and aſcended into heaven: *For if we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again, even ſo them alſo which ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him.*

There

There are two things to be explained in the words, before we come to conſider the matter of them:

Firſt, What is meant by thoſe that *ſleep in Jeſus*.

Secondly, What by God's *bringing them with him*.

Firſt, What is meant by thoſe that ſleep in Jeſus. Sleep is a metaphor uſed for death by all ſorts of writers, profane and ſacred; and by the ancient Chriſtians, the place of burial was called κοιμητήριον, that is, a ſleeping place. This metaphor is ſometimes applied to the death of the wicked, but moſt frequently uſed of the death of the righteous, becauſe to them it is truly a reſt. And ſo the Prophet ſpeaking of the death of the righteous, calls it, Iſa. lvii. 2. *They ſhall enter into peace, they ſhall reſt in their beds.*

And the death of the righteous is very fitly called a ſleep, both as it is a reſt from labour and pain: *bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they reſt from their labour*, Rev. xiv. 13. And likewiſe becauſe ſleep is not final, but in order to waking again. The death of the righteous is not an eternal ſleep of the body, but that ſhall be awakened in the morning of the reſurrection.

But why is the death of good men called a *ſleeping in Jeſus?* διὰ Ἰησοῦ, *for Jeſus ſake;* which may ſeem to have ſome particular relation to thoſe who died martyrs for Chriſt; as ſome likewiſe underſtand that text, Rev. xiv. 13 *Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord*, that is, that ſuffer for his cauſe; *for they reſt from their labours*, that is, their ſufferings are then at an end. But we ſhall beſt underſtand the meaning of this phraſe, by comparing it with thoſe others which ſeem to be equivalent to it, as 1 Cor. xv. 18. *They alſo that are fallen aſleep in Chriſt;* ver. 23. *They that are Chriſt's at his coming*, that is, they that belong to him, that died in the faith of Chriſt. So likewiſe is this, 2 Theſſ. iv. 10. *The dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt*; that is, the Chriſtians that are dead before the coming of Chriſt, ſhall firſt be raiſed, before thoſe that are alive ſhall be changed, Heb. xi. 13. *All theſe died in faith*, that is, in firm belief of God's promiſe of a better life. So that *to ſleep in Chriſt, to be Chriſt's, to die in Chriſt, to die in the faith*, do all ſeem to ſignify the ſame thing, *viz.* to die in the ſtate

of

of true Christians. For so we understand the like expressions of *being in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1. *He that is in Christ*, that is, every sincere Christian; and of *abiding in Christ*, John xv. 4. *He that abideth in me.* So to die in Christ, is to die a true Christian, in the faith and obedience of the gospel.

And it is observable, that in the phrase and stile of the New Testament, we are said to die all in, and with Christ; to be in him, and to live in him, and to walk in him, by our sanctification and obedience; to die with him, by the mortification of our lusts; to rise with him, by our renovation to a new life; to ascend with him into heaven, and to have our life hid with Christ in God, by our heavenly affections and hopes, and by death to sleep in him.

But before I pass over this phrase of sleeping in Jesus, there is one difficulty more about the sleep of the soul, which seems to be countenanced from this text, *those that sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him;* as if the Apostle spake here of the souls of good men which had been asleep, and Christ should bring with him to be united to their bodies, which should be raised; as likewise from the whole tenor of the Apostle's discourse about the resurrection, 1 Cor. 15. where the Apostle says nothing of the living of the soul before the body be raised; as if the soul, separated from the body were in a state of insensibility, till the resurrection. But the true answer to this is, that neither our Saviour, in his discourse of the resurrection, nor St. Paul in the 15th chapter to the Corinthians, nor here in this text, do keep closely to the proving of the resurrection of the body; but of a blessed immortality after this life, against the *Sadducees, who said there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit.* But sometimes they prove that there is a life after death; and sometimes that, at the resurrection, the soul shall be joined to a spiritual and heavenly body, and that the whole man shall enjoy perfect bliss and happiness.

But this opinion, or rather dream, concerning the sleep of the soul from the time of death, that is, from the time of the separation of the soul from the body till the

the general reſurrection, may be effectually confuted theſe two ways:

1. By taking away the ground of it: and,

2. By producing ſeveral texts of ſcripture, which are utterly inconſiſtent with it. And this I ſhall the rather do, becauſe ſome men have taken a great deal of pains to eſtabliſh and prove this opinion; though I confeſs I do not well underſtand to what end, becauſe there is as little comfort as truth in it.

1. By taking away the only ground; that I know of, of this opinion; and that is, from the frequent metaphor and reſemblance in ſcripture of death to ſleep. And indeed thoſe which are dead, are frequently in ſcripture ſaid to ſleep, or to be fallen aſleep: But then (which falls out very croſs to this opinion) this metaphor of ſleep is no where in ſcripture applied to the ſoul, but to the body reſting in the grave, in order to its being awakened and raiſed out of this ſleep at the reſurrection. And thus it is frequently uſed, with expreſs reference to the body: Dan. xii. 2. *Many of them that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake;* and ſurely *ſleeping in the duſt of the earth,* can only be applied to the body. And more expreſly yet, Matth. xxvii. 52. *And the graves were opened, and many bodies of ſaints which ſlept aroſe.* Acts xiii. 36. *David, after he had ſerved his own generation by the will of God, fell aſleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and ſaw corruption: but he whom God raiſed again, ſaw no corruption.* *Now that of David which fell aſleep and was buried with his fathers, and ſaw corruption,* was certainly his *body, and that* of our Saviour which *was raiſed again, and ſaw no corruption,* was likewiſe his body, according to that prediction concerning him, *Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell,* in Hades, by which is plainly meant the ſtate and place of ſouls ſeparated from the body; *nor ſuffer thy holy one to ſee corruption,* that is, the body of our bleſſed Lord to rot in the grave. 1 Cor. xv. 20. *But now is Chriſt riſen from the dead, and become the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept;* that is, the reſurrection of his body out of the grave is an earneſt and aſſurance, that our bodies alſo ſhall be raiſed. And ver. 51. *We ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed;* where the A-

poſtle

postle undoubtedly speaks both of the death and change of these corruptible bodies. And so likewise the text is to be understood of the resurrection of the bodies of the saints, which shall be raised up by the sound of the great trumpet, and re-united to their souls, that they may in person accompany Christ at his coming. So that it is the body, which is every where said in scripture to sleep, and not the soul; and if so, then the only foundation of this opinion is taken away.

2. I shall shew, that this opinion of the sleep of the soul is utterly inconsistent with several passages of scripture, which plainly suppose the contrary; as Luke xvi. 22, 23. where, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the different states of good and bad men, immediately after their departure out of this life, are described; but they are so described, that it is evident that the souls of neither of them are asleep. It is said of Lazarus, that *he was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom, and* that there *he was comforted;* and of the rich man, that *he was in hell,* and there *tormented in flames.* This was not like to be a state of sleep and insensibility, and the rich man cries out of his torment; and that we may be sure he was awake, he is said *to lift up his eyes.* And there is all the reason that can be to conclude, that Lazarus was every whit as sensible of the comfort and happiness that he was in, as the rich man was of his torment. Luke xxiii. 43. where our Saviour says to the penitent thief, *this day shalt thou be with me in paradise:* but not surely to sleep there till the resurrection. Though some have endeavoured to avoid the force of this text, by referring *this day* to what goes before, and not to what follows after; as if our Saviour had said; *I say unto thee this day;* and not, *this day thou shalt be with me in paradise:* which is a foolish evasion, because, *I say unto thee,* necessarily implies the present time, and there is no need to add, *this day;* besides that there is no such phrase any where used, as *I say unto thee this day.* Phil. i. 23. *I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.* But if *to be with Christ,* be to be in a state of sleep and insensibility, how is that so much better than to be in the body, serving God and his church? 2 Cor. v. 6. *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that*

while we ſojourn in the body, we are abſent from the Lord; are confident, I ſay, and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord. But certainly, *to be preſent with the Lord*, which the apoſtle here affirms that good men are, ſo ſoon as they depart out of the body, muſt needs ſignify a ſtate of happineſs; which ſleep is not, but only of inſenſibility. Beſides that the Apoſtle's argument would be very flat, and but a cold encouragement to Chriſtians againſt the fears of death, that, as ſoon as we are dead, we ſhall fall aſleep and become inſenſible. But the Apoſtle uſeth it as an argument why we ſhould be willing to die as ſoon as God pleaſeth, and the ſooner the better; becauſe ſo ſoon as ever we quit theſe bodies, *we ſhall be preſent with the Lord:* that is, ſhall be admitted to the bliſsful ſight and enjoyment of him; and that whilſt we *abide in the body*, we are detained from our happineſs. But if our ſouls ſleep as well as our bodies, till the general reſurrection, it is all one whether we continue in the body or not, as to any happineſs we ſhall enjoy in the mean time; which is directly contrary to the main ſcope of the Apoſtle's argument.

Secondly, What is here meant by *God's bringing with him thoſe that ſleep in Jeſus?* In general, theſe words ſignify a bleſſed reſurrection, as may be ſeen by the oppoſition; *If we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again; even ſo them alſo that ſleep in Jeſus, ſhall God bring with him.* Where to *Chriſt's death* is oppoſed *our ſleeping in Jeſus;* and to his *reſurrection, God's bringing us with him;* that is, his raiſing us out of the grave to accompany him at his coming. But the meaning of this expreſſion will beſt appear, by conſidering what follows after the text: *For this we ſay by the word of the Lord*, that is, by ſpecial revelation, *that we that are alive, and remain at the coming of the Lord ſhall not prevent them that are aſleep;* that is, we ſhall not be taken up into heaven, before the ſaints who are already dead ſhall be raiſed: but thus it ſhall be, *the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, and the voice of an Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt: then we which are alive, and remain, ſhall be caught up together with*

with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. The plain meaning of all which is, that first *the dead in Christ* shall be raised and taken up to him in the air, to accompany him at his coming, and thus *he shall bring them with him;* and then *those which are alive at his coming,* shall be changed and taken up likewise, *to meet the Lord in the air.* And the same account the same Apostle gives us, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. *Behold,* says he, *I shew you a mystery,* (which is the same he had said before in the former text, *this we say unto you by the word of the Lord*) *I shew you a mystery,* (so he calls that which was not revealed to all by our Saviour, but to himself particularly) *we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed;* that is, all shall not die, but at the coming of Christ many shall be found alive and changed; but these shall have no advantage of those who were dead in Christ before: for *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible;* that is, with spiritual bodies which will be no more liable to corruption; and we, that is, those that remain then alive, *shall also be changed.* From all which it appears, that the meaning of this expression, *those that sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him,* is this, that the Lord Jesus shall come *in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father,* and by the sound of *the trump of God* shall raise *the dead in Christ.* And our Saviour tells us more particularly, that this shall be done by the ministry of angels, Mat. xxiv. 30, 31. *When the Son of man comes with power and great glory, that the Angels shall with the great sound of the trumpet gather the elect from the four winds;* and when they are thus gathered, *God shall bring them with him.*

And here I cannot but observe, that the title of God is given to our Saviour, who is to be Judge of the world. *Them that sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him.* And elsewhere our Apostle speaking of this glorious appearance and coming of Christ to judgment, calls him *the great God;* Tit. ii. 13. *Looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Which cannot be understood of the appearance of two persons, *viz.* God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ our Saviour; for then the article would have been added to distinguish them, and it would not have

been ἡ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, but ἡ τῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, as if he had ſaid, *the appearance of the great God, and of Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour*; when as according to the propriety of the Greek, the article being wanting, it ought to be rendered thus, *looking for the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt the great God and our Saviour*. This is very much confirmed, in that the ſame Apoſtle here in the text, ſpeaking of Chriſt's coming to judgment, calls him God; *them ſhall God bring with him*.

The words thus explained, give us this obſervation; that it is a firm principle of the Chriſtian religion, that thoſe who die in the faith of Chriſt, that is, in the ſtate of true Chriſtianity, ſhall have a bleſſed reſurrection. *If we believe*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *that Jeſus died, and roſe again; even ſo them alſo that ſleep in him, ſhall God bring with him*. The Apoſtle to the Hebrews reckons *the reſurrection of the dead, among the principles of the doctrine of Chriſt*, Heb. vi. 2.

In ſpeaking to this obſervation, I ſhall do theſe three things:

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew what it is to die in the faith of Chriſt, or in the ſtate of a true Chriſtian, which is here called, *ſleeping in Jeſus*.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew how the death and reſurrection of Chriſt are an argument and proof of our reſurrection from the dead. And,

Thirdly, Wherein the bleſſedneſs of the reſurrection of the juſt doth conſiſt.

Firſt, What it is to die in the faith of Chriſt, or in the ſtate of a true Chriſtian, which is here called, *ſleeping in Jeſus*. And this imports one of theſe two things; either,

1. That we die in ſuch a belief of the doctrine of Chriſt, as hath been accompanied with a holy obedience of life to the commands and precepts of the goſpel; that our profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion hath evidenced itſelf in the virtues of a good life, in the conſtant courſe and tenor of an holy and unblameable converſation. This aſſurance the Chriſtian religion gives us, that *if we have our fruit unto holineſs, our end ſhall be everlaſting life*.

Or

Or else, 2. That we exercise such a sincere and unfeigned repentance before death for the errors and miscarriages of our lives, as produceth a firm purpose and resolution of amending our lives, if God should be pleased to prolong and continue them. For only such a belief and profession of the Christian religion, as produceth one of these effects, doth put us into a state of grace and give us hope of a blessed resurrection to eternal life.

The first of these effects is much to be preferred, *viz.* the general course and tenor of a holy life; the latter being infinitely more hazardous, by reason of the deceitfulness of our hearts, and the infinite uncertainty of a death-bed repentance.

Secondly, I shall shew how the death and resurrection of Christ are an argument and proof of our resurrection from the dead. *If we believe*, &c.

I shall shew by and by, how the resurrection of Christ is an argument and proof of our resurrection. But why is his death here mentioned, as part of the argument? *If we believe that Christ died.* The reason is obvious: because the truth of the miracle of his resurrection depends upon the reality of his death; for if Christ was not really dead, then he could not rise from the dead, and the pretence of his resurrection was a delusion and imposture; but if he was really dead, and rose again from the dead, then have we a firm ground for the belief of a future resurrection. Now this Christians do believe, that Christ was really dead, and rose again from the dead, and that upon very good grounds. We need not doubt but that the malice of the Jews took care to kill him; and the story makes it evident, because blood and water came out of his side, which is a certain proof that his heart was pierced; and it could not be a deliquium, or a fainting fit, because after his blood was exhausted, he could not naturally return to life again. But we need not contend much about this, since the Heathens who are unconcerned confess this. Tacitus, in the 15th book of his annals, tells us, that "Jesus was put to death by crucifixion under Pontius "Pilate." And Josephus, who was a Jew, both by his birth and religion, and lived presently after our Savi-

our's time, in the 18th book of his Jewiſh Antiquities tells us, that "Chriſt was crucified, and that he appeared to his followers the third day, riſen from the dead."

Now this cannot in reaſon be ſaid to be done only in appearance, and to be a mere illuſion of mens ſenſes, as ſome antient hereticks pretended; becauſe that which may be an evaſion in any caſe, is to be admitted in none. For what greater evidence is poſſible of any one's riſing from the dead, than the circumſtances of our Saviour's reſurrection? that there was a great earthquake, and that the ſtone was rolled away from the grave, and the grave-cloaths found there, and his body gone; and that after this he appeared, and converſed ſo often with ſo many, to whom he was well known when alive, and entertained long diſcourſes with them, and did eat and drink with them, and permit them to handle his body, and to put their fingers into the wound of his ſide; and all this exactly agreeing with his own prediction. So that if we believe the providence of God, we cannot think it to be ſo little vigilant, as that men, after their utmoſt care, muſt neceſſarily be deluded in a matter of ſo great conſequence.

Now I ſhall ſhew, that the death and reſurrection of Chriſt is a very good argument of our reſurrection. 1 Cor. xv. 20. Chriſt is ſaid to be *riſen from the dead, and become the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept.* Not that he was the firſt that was raiſed from the dead, for Elijah and Eliſha raiſed ſome, and ſo did our Saviour himſelf in his life-time: but the Apoſtle here alludes to the firſt-fruits among the Jews, which were a pledge and an earneſt of a future harveſt. In like manner the reſurrection of Chriſt is called the *firſt-fruits of them that ſlept*, becauſe it is an earneſt of that general harveſt, which ſhall be at the end of the world, when *the Angels, the reapers, ſhall come to gather the elect from the four winds.* But the reſurrection of others before Chriſt was no earneſt of this, becauſe they were raiſed; but Chriſt is ſaid to *riſe from the dead by his own power.* And in this ſenſe he is truly ſaid by St. John, Rev. i. 5. to be *the firſt begotten from the dead.* And this ſecures our reſurrection to eternal life; becauſe he who hath promiſed

promised to raise us up, did *raise himself from the dead.*

And that Christ intended to lay great stress upon this argument, appears in that he foretold it so often, as the great sign that he would give to the Jews to convince their infidelity. John ii. 18, 19. *The Jews said unto him, what sign shewest thou unto us? Jesus answered, destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days; speaking of the temple of his body.* And Matth. xii. 39, 40. he tells the Jews that he would give them *no other sign but the sign of the prophet* Jonah, that *as he was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man be three days in the bowels of the earth.*

Now the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and, which was consequent upon it, his ascension into heaven, does first give us satisfaction in general of another life after this, and an immortality after death; and then of his power to raise us from the dead, because he raised himself; as the Apostle argues, Rom. viii. 11. *If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit which dwelleth in you.* And then, lastly, it secures us of his truth and fidelity, that he will perform what he hath promised us. He could not have promised any thing more improbable than this, that he himself would rise again the third day; and therefore since he kept his word in this, there is no reason to distrust him in any thing else that he hath promised. By his own resurrection from the dead, he wrought such a miracle, as is the most proper to confirm us in the belief of our resurrection to eternal life: Rev. i. 18. *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, Amen.* What is that? We have it explained, Rev. iii. 14. where he says of himself, *I am the Amen, the faithful and true witness.* This very thing, that Christ was dead, and lives again, makes him the *Amen, the true and faithful witness.* I proceed to the

Third and last thing, *viz.* Wherein the blessedness of the resurrection of the just shall consist; namely, in these two things:

I. In-

I. In the mighty change which ſhall be made in theſe vile and mortal bodies of ours, and the glorious qualities they ſhall then be inveſted withal. And,

II. In the conſequent happineſs of the whole man, of the ſoul and body, united and purified.

I. In the mighty change which ſhall then be made in theſe vile and mortal bodies of ours, and the glorious qualities which they ſhall then be inveſted withal. But wherein this glory ſhall conſiſt, becauſe it is matter of pure revelation, we muſt wholly rely upon ſcripture for the particular account and explication of it. And there are three texts of ſcripture, wherein this glorious change which ſhall be made in our bodies at the reſurrection, is more particularly mentioned and deſcribed. The

Firſt is Luke xx. 35, 36. *But they who ſhall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* This our Saviour ſpeaks, becauſe that which occaſioned this diſcourſe concerning the reſurrection, was a queſtion moved by the Sadducees concerning a woman that had ſeven huſbands in her life-time; upon which they captiouſly aſked our Saviour, *Whoſe wife of the ſeven this woman ſhould be at the reſurrection?* To which our Saviour anſwers, by taking away the foundation of it, telling them, that in the other world *they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And the reaſon of this is very obvious; becauſe the reaſon why men marry now is, becauſe they are mortal; and therefore to preſerve and propagate the kind, which would otherwiſe fail, marriage was inſtituted: but in the other world this reaſon will ceaſe; becauſe then men ſhall be immortal, and die no more. And therefore our Saviour, after he had ſaid, that *at the reſurrection of the dead, men neither marry, nor are given in marriage;* he immediately adds as the reaſon of it, *neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels,* that is, they ſhall be like them in the immortal duration of their beings; *and are the children of God, being the children of the reſurrection.* Good men are now the children of God, becauſe they reſemble him in the holy diſpoſition of their minds: but then they ſhall be like him in the participation of his

his happiness, so far as finite and created beings are capable: the whole man, the body as well as the soul shall be partakers of immortality. And this is a glorious change, for a frail and mortal body, liable to pains, and diseases, and death, to become immortal, and freed from all those troublesome accidents, to which they are now liable. The

Second text to this purpose is, Phil. iii. 20. *But our conversation is in heaven,* says St. Paul, speaking of true and sincere Christians; *But our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.* And this is a great change indeed, whether we consider that our bodies now are vile and corruptible; or the pattern according to which they shall be changed: *They shall be fashioned like to the glorious body of our blessed Saviour;* that wherein he now sits in the highest heavens, at the right hand of the throne of God. And what glory can we desire beyond that, with which God thought fit to reward his own Son, after all his obedience and sufferings? And this will be the more credible, if we consider the relation which the scripture mentions so often between Christ and all true Christians. He is the head, and they are the members; now there must be a conformity between these. A glorious head and vile members, would make a monstrous and irregular body; nay, the head could not be glorious, if the members were not so too. Or, *lastly,* If we consider the mighty power which will be put forth for the effecting this change. The omnipotency of the Son of God will exert itself in this work. So the Apostle here tells us, that *the Lord Jesus Christ will change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.* Omnipotency will display its whole force in bringing about this change. And what cannot that almighty power do, which is able to conquer and subdue all things?

The *Third* text, and that wherein this change is most fully

fully and particularly deſcribed, is 1 Cor. xv. 35. *But ſome will ſay, how are the dead raiſed? And with what bodies do they come?* This was the common objection which the infidels made againſt this article of the reſurrection: either men ſhall riſe with the ſame bodies which they had in this life; or they ſhall not. If with the ſame bodies which they had in this life, to what purpoſe will that be; ſince in the other world men ſhall not eat or drink, or propagate their kind and conſequently have no uſe of ſuch a body as ours now is? But if it be not the ſame body, how then are mens bodies raiſed? To this queſtion, the Apoſtle gives a clear anſwer; That the bodies of men which ſhall be raiſed, ſhall in ſome reſpect be the ſame; and in other reſpects not the ſame; the matter and ſubſtance of the body may ſtill be the ſame, and yet may undergo a mighty change, be faſhioned after another manner, and be endowed with quite other qualities than it had before. And this he illuſtrates by two inſtances.

1. By the difference between the corn which is ſown, and that which grows up. And,

2. By the difference of ſeveral ſorts of bodies, which are all made of the ſame kind of matter.

1. From the difference between the corn which is ſown, and that which is grown up, ver. 36, 37, 38. *Thou fool, that which thou ſoweſt, is not quickened except it die*, that is, unleſs it be firſt buried in the earth, and rot, and be corrupted there; *and that which thou ſoweſt, thou ſoweſt not that body which ſhall be, but bare grain, as of wheat, or ſome other kind. But bare grain*, that is, a naked grain, without either ſtalk, or blade, or ear: But God giveth it a body, as it hath pleaſed him; that is, the author of nature makes it ſpring up in a blade, which grows up into a ſtalk, which bears an ear that contains many grains of corn; and to every ſeed his own body, that is, a body of the ſame kind with the ſeed that was ſown.

2. The other inſtance is from the difference of ſeveral ſorts of bodies, which are all made of the ſame kind of matter, put into different forms, ſome more perfect and glorious, and others leſs: ver. 39, 40, 41. *All fleſh is not the ſame fleſh; but there is one fleſh of men, another*

another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds; and yet all these are fashioned out of the same kind of matter. *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another;* and the celestial bodies are of a different lustre and glory; *for there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; and one star differeth from another star in glory.*

And then he applies these instances to the resurrection, ver. 42. *So also is* it in *the resurrection of the dead.* The matter which was vile before, when it was buried in the earth, puts on another form, and by the power of God is raised up a different thing, and far more glorious than when it was put into the earth: ver. 42, 43, 44. *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural (or an animal) body, it is raised a spiritual body.* I shall briefly explain these several expressions which represent to us the difference between our bodies, as they now are, and as they shall be at the resurrection.

It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. Our bodies, as they are now, are unequally tempered, and in a perpetual flux and change, continually tending to corruption, being made of such contrary principles and qualities, as by their perpetual conflict do conspire the ruin and dissolution of it. But when they are raised again, they shall be so tempered and refined, as to be free from all these destructive qualities, which threaten a change and dissolution; they shall be raised incorruptible, so as not to be liable to decay and death. The body, though it continues still material, and consists of matter, shall then partake of the immortality of the soul to which it is united, and be of equal duration with it. So the Apostle tells us, ver. 52, 53. *The dead shall be raised incorruptible; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. Our bodies, when they are committed to the earth, are vile offensive carcases, and therefore we hide and bury them out

out of ſight: but they ſhall be raiſed beautiful and glorious, as different from what they were before, as the heavenly manſions, in which they are to dwell for ever, are from the dark cell of the grave, out of which they are raiſed; and they, that before were only fit company for duſt and worms, ſhall be admitted into the reviving preſence of God, and the bleſſed ſociety of Angels.

It is ſown in weakneſs, it ſhall be raiſed in power. Our bodies now fall to the ground through their own frailty, and drop into the grave through the weakneſs and infirmity of nature to ſupport and bear them up any longer: but though they fall through weakneſs, they ſhall at the reſurrection be endowed with ſuch a life, and ſtrength and vigour, as to be able, without any change or decay, to abide and continue for ever in the ſame ſtate.

It is ſown a natural body, ψυχικὸν *an animal body*, an earthly cottage or tabernacle fitted for the ſoul to lodge in for a little while, *but it is raiſed a ſpiritual body.* And this is the ſum of all the reſt. Our bodies in this world are groſs fleſh and blood, liable to be affected with natural and ſenſual pleaſures, and to be afflicted with natural pains and diſeaſes, to be preſſed with natural neceſſities of hunger and thirſt, and obnoxious to all thoſe changes and accidents to which natural things are ſubject: *but it ſhall be raiſed a ſpiritual body*, pure and refined from the dregs of matter; it ſhall not hunger nor thirſt, be diſeaſed or in pain any more. Theſe *houſes of clay, whoſe foundation is in the duſt*, are continually decaying, and therefore they ſtand in need of perpetual reparation by food and phyſick: but *our houſe which ſhall be from heaven*, ſhall be of ſuch laſting and durable matter, as not only time, but even eternity itſelf ſhall make no impreſſion upon it, or cauſe the leaſt decay in it. *They who ſhall be accounted worthy*, ſays our Saviour, *to obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the dead, cannot die any more; but ſhall be like the Angels, and are the children of God;* that is, in ſome degree ſhall partake of the felicity and immortality of God himſelf, who is *always the ſame, and his years fail not. It is raiſed a ſpiritual body.* We ſhall then be, as it were, all

all spirit, and our very bodies shall be then so raised and refined, that they shall be no clog, no impediment to the operations of our souls; and surely we cannot but think this a glorious change, when we consider how our bodies do now crush our spirits, and what a melancholy and dead weight they are upon them, and how grievous an incumbrance, and trouble, and temptation, they are for the most part to us in this mortal state. I proceed now to the

II. Thing, wherein the blessedness of the just at the resurrection shall consist, *viz.* in the consequent happiness of the whole man, of the soul and body united and purified, the one from sin, the other from frailty and corruption: and both admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of the ever blessed God. But this is an argument too big for our narrow apprehensions of things, whilst we are in this mortal state: a subject too unwieldy for such children, as the wisest of us all are while we are in this world; and whenever we attempt to speak of it, we do but speak like children, and understand like children, and reason like children, about it. That which is imperfect must be done away; our souls must be raised to a greater perfection, and our understandings filled with a stronger and steadier light, before we can be fit to handle such a subject, according to the worth and dignity of it. We must first have been in heaven, and possessed of that felicity and glory which is there to be enjoyed, before we can think or talk of it in any measure as it deserves. In the mean time, whenever we set about it, we shall find our faculties oppressed with the weight and splendor of so vast and glorious an argument; like St. Paul, who, when he was caught up into paradise, saw and heard that, which, when he came down into this world again, he was not able to express, and which is not possible for man to utter.

So that in discoursing of the state of the blessed, we must content our selves with what the scripture hath declared in general concerning it, that it is a state of perfect freedom from all those infirmities and imperfections, those evils and miseries, those sins and temptations, to which we are liable in this world; a state of unspeakable and endless joy and happiness in the blessed sight

and preſence of God, and in the happy ſociety of an innumerable company of Angels, and of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.

So St. John deſcribes the felicities and glories of that ſtate, as they were repreſented to him in a viſion, Rev. xxi. 2. 3. 4. *And I John ſaw the holy city, new Jeruſalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, ſaying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God. And God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain; for the former things are paſſed away;* that is, all thoſe evils which we ſaw and ſuffered in this world, will for ever vaniſh and diſappear. And ver. 23. *And the city had no need of the ſun, neither of the moon to ſhine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof.* And which is the greateſt privilege and felicity of all, no ſin ſhall be there; ver. 27. *And there ſhall in nowiſe enter into it any thing that defileth;* and conſequently no miſery and curſe ſhall be there: chap. xxii. 3. 4. *And there ſhall be no more curſe; but the throne of God, and of the Lamb ſhall be in it, and his ſervants ſhall ſerve him, and they ſhall ſee his face.* In which laſt words, our employment and our happineſs are expreſſed; but what in particular theſe ſhall be, and wherein they ſhall conſiſt, it is impoſſible for us now to deſcribe; it is ſufficient to know, in general, that our employment ſhall be our unſpeakable pleaſure, and every way ſuitable to the glory and happineſs of that ſtate, and as much above the nobleſt and moſt delightful employment of this world, as the perfection of our bodies, and the powers of our ſouls, ſhall then be above what they were in this world.

In a word, our happineſs ſhall be ſuch as is worthy of the great King of the world to beſtow upon his faithful ſervants, and infinitely beyond the juſt reward of their beſt ſervices; it is *to ſee God, and to be ever with him, in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for evermore.*

SER-

SERMON CLXXXV.

Of the happineſs of good men, in the future ſtate.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THE great deſign of this epiſtle is to perſwade men to purity and holineſs of life, without which we can lay no claim to the promiſes and privileges of the goſpel. Chriſtians are called the children of God; and this is a great privilege indeed, a mighty argument of God's love and favour to us, to own us for his children. *Behold, what manner of love the father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God.* This is the happineſs of our preſent condition: *now we are the ſons of God; and if ſons then heirs;* this gives a title to a future inheritance. *And it does not yet appear what we ſhall be;* the circumſtances of our future happineſs and glory are not perfectly revealed to us, only thus much in general is diſcovered to us, that we ſhall be very happy, becauſe we ſhall be admitted to the immediate ſight and enjoyment of God; and we cannot ſee him and enjoy him, unleſs we be like him; and to be like God, is to be happy. *We know that when he ſhall appear,* ἐὰν φανερωθῇ, *that is, when it ſhall appear. It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, but when it ſhall appear,* that is, when our future happineſs ſhall be revealed to us: it is not yet particularly diſcovered to us, but thus much in general we know of it beforehand, that *we ſhall be like God, for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* In which words there are theſe four things worthy of our conſideration:

Firſt, The preſent obſcurity of our future ſtate, as to the particular circumſtances of that happineſs which good men ſhall enjoy in another world: *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be.*

Secondly, That thus much we certainly know of it in general, that it ſhall conſiſt in the ſight and enjoyment of God; *We know that when it ſhall appear, we ſhall ſee him as he is.*

Thirdly, Wherein our likeneſs to God ſhall conſiſt: *We ſhall be like him.*

Fourthly, The neceſſary connexion between our likeneſs to God, and our ſight and enjoyment of him: *We ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is:* that is, becauſe *we ſhall ſee him as he is*, therefore it is certain *we ſhall be like him;* for unleſs we be like God, we are not capable of ſeeing and enjoying him.

Firſt, The preſent obſcurity of our future ſtate, as to the particular circumſtances of that happineſs which good men ſhall enjoy in another world: *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be.* The ſcripture tells us, that it is a glory yet to be revealed: that there ſhall be ſuch a ſtate of happineſs for good men in another world, though it was in a great meaſure obſcure to the world before, both to Jews and Gentiles, yet it is now clearly revealed to us by *the appearance of Jeſus Chriſt, who hath brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel.* But the particular circumſtances of this happineſs are ſtill hid from us; and as it is a needleſs, ſo it would be a faulty curioſity in us to pry and enquire into them. It is enough that we certainly know there is ſuch a ſtate; the knowledge of this in general is enough to quicken our diligence, and excite our endeavours for the obtaining and ſecuring of it: it is enough to mortify all evil affections in us, and to baffle all temptations to ſin, to know that it will rob us of ſo great a felicity, as God hath promiſed to us; it is enough to ſupport and comfort us under all the miſeries and afflictions of this preſent time, to be fully aſſured that after a few days of ſorrow and trouble are over, we ſhall be unſpeakably and eternally happy. A firm perſuaſion of this, is argument enough to our obedience, and a ſufficient ſupport to our faith and patience,

and

we need enquire no further. Thus much God hath revealed to us for our comfort and encouragement, the reſt he hath concealed from us, and it would be a bold intruſion into his ſecrets, to pry and ſearch any farther; and if we ſhould, it would be to no purpoſe. For in things which depend upon divine revelation it is impoſſible for us to know any more, than God is pleaſed to reveal to us. In matters of pure revelation, we can not go beyond the word of the Lord; *The things of God knoweth no man, but the ſpirit of God,* or he to whom the ſpirit of God ſhall reveal them. If one ſhould come from a ſtrange country, never known and diſcovered before, and ſhould only tell us in general, that it was a moſt pleaſant and delightful place, and the inhabitants a brave, and generous, and wealthy people, under the government of a wiſe and great King, ruling by excellent laws; and that the particular delights and advantages of it were not to be imagined by any thing he knew in our own country, and ſhould ſay no more of it; If we give credit to the perſon that brought this relation, it would create in us a great admiration of the country deſcribed to us, and a mighty concern to ſee it, and live in it. But it would be a vain curioſity, to reaſon and conjecture about the particular conveniencies of it; becauſe it would be impoſſible, by any diſcourſe, to arrive at the certain knowledge of any more, than he who only knew it was pleaſed to tell us. This is the caſe as to our heavenly country. Our bleſſed Saviour, who came down from heaven, from the boſom of his Father, hath revealed to us a ſtate of happineſs and glory in general, that there is ſuch a kingdom prepared for us; and when he was leaving the world, he told us that he was going thither by the way of the grave, and when he was riſen again from the dead, and was aſcended into heaven, he promiſed to come again at the end of the world, and to raiſe us out of the grave, and to carry us into thoſe celeſtial manſions, *where we ſhall be for ever with the Lord.* And beyond this he hath made no particular diſcovery to us of the felicity of that place, he hath given us no punctual repreſentation of the glory of it; he hath not declared to us in a ſpecial manner, what our work and

employment ſhall be, in what way God will communicate himſelf to us, nor what kind of converſation we ſhall have with the bleſſed Angels, and with one another, and how far we ſhall know, or be known to one another, or whether we ſhall ſtand affected in any peculiar manner to thoſe who were our friends, and relations, and acquaintance in this world. Theſe, and perhaps a thouſand things more which may concern the glories of that ſtate, and the happineſs and employment of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, our Saviour hath told us nothing of, but only in general; and it is impoſſible for us with any certainty to make out the reſt, any more than children can make a conjecture of the deſigns and reaſonings of a wiſe man; not only becauſe it would be of no great uſe to us, but becauſe the imperfection of human nature, and of our faculties in this ſtate of mortality, is not able to bear a full and clear repreſentation of ſo great a glory.

When our Saviour was transfigured upon the mount, and a little image of heaven was ſhewn to men, the diſciples were ſtrangely amazed, and knew not what they ſaid. And St. Paul tells us, that when he was *taken up into the third heaven*, the things which he ſaw and heard there, *were not to be uttered*. So that well might the Apoſtle ſay here in the text, *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*. Our future ſtate is very obſcure to us while we are in this world, as to any diſtinct and particular knowledge of it.

There are a ſort of idle men in the world, I mean the Schoolmen, who have been very buſy and bold in their enquiries, very peremptory in their determinations of ſeveral things relating to it; but after all our ſearch and ſtudy, it is impoſſible for us to advance one ſtep farther in the knowledge of it, than God hath been pleaſed in his holy word to reveal it to us. And how much God hath revealed, I ſhall, in diſcourſing of the

Second particular, conſider; namely, That thus much we know of it in general, that it ſhall conſiſt in the bleſſed viſion of God; *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but when he ſhall appear, we ſhall ſee him as he is*. Thus much all Chriſtians know, becauſe our Saviour hath plainly revealed it to them, that the bleſſedneſs

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of the saints should consist in *the vision of God.* Matth. v. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.* Which the Apostle expresseth with a little variation, Heb. xii. 14. *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Here is a great thing expressed to us in a few words, *we shall see him as he is*; for the better understanding of which it will be convenient to enquire into these three things.

I. What is meant here by *seeing God.*

II. What by seeing him as he is.

III. The fitness of this metaphor, to express to us the happiness of our future state.

I. What is meant by *seeing God.* The Schoolmen have spun out abundance of fine cobwebs about this, which in their language they call *the beatifick vision of God;* and they generally describe and explain it so as to render it a very dry and sapless thing. They make it to consist in a perpetual gazing upon God, and contemplating the divine essence and perfections, in which, as in a clearer mirror, they suppose men to see and know all other things. But this is a very jejune and insipid notion of happiness, but yet suitable enough to the gust and inclination of those that devised it. And indeed men are naturally apt to form such notions of God and heaven to themselves, as are most agreeable to their own appetites and inclinations. So the heathen world framed to themselves Gods after their own image and likeness, of like passions, and inclinations, and lusts with themselves; and such a heaven as pleased themselves, and was most suitable to their own gross imaginations of pleasure and happiness; and therefore they described it by pleasant fields, and clear rivers, and shady walks. So likewise Mahomet framed such a paradise, as is most agreeable to our sensual appetites and lusts. In like manner the Schoolmen, who addicted themselves wholly to contemplation, would have the happiness of heaven to consist in that which they themselves took most delight in. But surely the scripture understands something more by the *sight of God,* than a bare contemplation of him. It is a known rule given by divines for the understanding of scripture; *The words that signify sense and knowledge, are very often in scripture to*

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be ſo underſtood, as to comprehend in them thoſe affections and effects, which ſenſe and knowledge are apt to produce in us. So our knowledge of God doth in ſcripture many times import the ſum of all religon, the whole duty of man; *He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar*; And God's knowing of us, ſignifies the whole happineſs of man; *The Lord knoweth them that are his.* So taſting and ſight are in ſcripture put for experience and enjoyment, Pſal. xxxiv. 8. *Taſte and ſee that the Lord is gracious.* Lament. iii 1. *I am the man that have ſeen affliction, that is, that have ſuffered it.* 1 Pet. iii. 10. *He that will love life, and ſee good days,* that is, *enjoy them.* And ſo we uſe the word in common ſpeech. To ſee a friend, is to enjoy the pleaſure of his company, and all the advantages of his converſation. So here, *the ſight of God* doth comprehend and take in all the happineſs of a future ſtate. As to ſee the King, includes the court, and all the glorious circumſtances of his attendance; ſo *to ſee God,* does take in all that glory, and joy, and happineſs, which flows from his preſence.

I grant indeed, that this expreſſion primarily and immediately denotes our perfect knowledge of God in the other life, in oppoſition to thoſe obſcure and more imperfect diſcoveries and apprehenſions which we have of him in theſe earthly bodies; for I think we need make no doubt, but that ſight is here taken in a ſpiritual and intellectual ſenſe. We are not to dream that we ſhall ſee God with our bodily eyes; for being a pure ſpirit, he cannot be the object of any corporeal ſenſe. But we ſhall have ſuch a ſight of him, as a pure ſpirit is capable of; we ſhall ſee him with the eyes of our minds and underſtanding. And in this ſenſe we do in ſome degree ſee God in this life, by faith and knowledge; but it is but darkly, and, as it were, *through a gluſs* that we ſee him, as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it. But when we come to heaven, our underſtandings ſhall be raiſed and cleared to ſuch a degree of ſtrength and perfection, that we ſhall know God after a far more perfect manner, than we are capable of in this ſtate of mortality. And this perfect knowledge of him, together with the happy effects of it, thoſe affections which it ſhall raiſe in us, and

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that bleſſed enjoyment of the chief good which we are not able to expreſs, is that which is called *the ſight of God*.

II. What is here meant by *ſeeing God as he is: We ſhall ſee him as he is.* Now this doth farther and emphatically expreſs our perfect knowledge and enjoyment of God.

1. Our perfect knowledge of him. Not that we are to imagine, that when we come to heaven, our underſtanding can or ſhall be raiſed to ſuch a pitch, as to be able perfectly to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of God: For all created underſtanding being naturally finite, we cannot imagine that it can be ſtretched to the comprehenſion of what is infinite, as the divine nature and perfections are. But our knowledge ſhall be advanced and raiſed to ſuch degrees of perfection, as a finite and created underſtanding is capable of.

And we may very reaſonably conceive, (and indeed the ſcripture leads us to it, without and beyond which, it is not ſafe to ſpeak of theſe things) I ſay, we may reaſonably conceive the perfection of this knowledge to conſiſt in theſe three things: In a more immediate, and clear, and certain knowledge of the divine nature and perfections, than we are capable of in this ſtate of mortality.

(1.) We ſhall then have an immediate knowledge of God. In this world we ſee him by the means and help of his word and works; we ſee him as he hath manifeſted and revealed himſelf to us in the holy ſcriptures, as he hath repreſented himſelf to us in the creatures, as the Apoſtle tells us, Rom. i. 20. That *his eternal power and godhead are clearly ſeen by the things that are made.* But thus we do not ſee God immediately and directly, but by a reflection of his perfections from the works of creation and providence. We ſee him by faith at a great diſtance, which the Apoſtle calls *ſeeing him* as it were *through a glaſs*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now faith in ſcripture is moſt frequently oppoſed to ſight, which is a more immediate view and nearer diſcovery of a thing. 2 Cor. v. 7. *We walk by faith, and not by ſight.* But in heaven we ſhall have an immediate

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and direct ſight ſight of God, that which the ſcripture calls, *ſeeing him face to face;* not at a diſtance as we do now by faith; not by reflection as we do now ſee him in the creatures; but we ſhall have an immediate and direct view of him. *Faith ſhall then ceaſe,* as the Apoſtle tells us, and be perfected in ſight, becauſe of the nearneſs and evidence of the object.

(2.) We ſhall not only then have an immediate, but a far clearer knowledge of God, than we have now in this life: 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *We now ſee him in a glaſs darkly,* ἐν αἰνίγματι, *in a riddle,* which is an obſcure and involved declaration of a thing. We have now but very dark and confuſed apprehenſions, and ſuch as do not only repreſent him very imperfectly, but many times very falſly to us. While our ſouls are muffled in theſe groſs bodies, we are compaſſed about with clouds, which do in a great meaſure intercept the ſight of him: But the light of glory will ſcatter all theſe clouds, *the vail ſhall then be taken away.* The reſurrection will refine our bodies to that purity, that they ſhall be fit inſtruments for our ſouls. We ſhall have ſpiritual bodies, as the Apoſtle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. ſo purified from all theſe dregs which now incumber them, that they ſhall be fit to be united to a ſpirit, and to act with it; and then *we ſhall with open face behold the glory of God,* as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. or, as it is here in the text, *we ſhall ſee him as he is.* We ſee him now many times *as he is not;* that is, we are liable to falſe and miſtaken conceptions of him: But then *we ſhall ſee him as he is.* The clearneſs of our knowledge will free us from all error and miſtake about him. We are now many times at a loſs, what conceptions to have of God; we are hard put to it to reconcile one perfection of God with another, and to make them conſiſtent and agree together. We believe his providence; but we are puzzled many times how to make that accord with his goodneſs and juſtice: But in heaven we ſhall ſee the harmony of all theſe, and that it was nothing but our ignorance and darkneſs, which made us imagine any diſcord and diſagreement in them.

(3.) We ſhall then likewiſe have a certain knowledge of God, free from all doubts concerning him. There

There may be a certainty in faith; but not that high degree of evidence and aſſurance which is in ſight. It is ſpoken by way of abating the certainty of faith, when it is called *the evidence of things not ſeen;* nay, many times the faith of good men is mixed with a great deal of fear and doubt of the contrary: but in the ſtate of glory, we ſhall not be liable to any of theſe doubtings and jealouſies, which do ſo frequently poſſeſs the beſt of men in this world. Then *we ſhall know, as alſo we are known,* as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. As God now knows us, ſo ſhall we then know him, as to the truth and certainty of our knowledge.

Now ſuch an immediate, and clear, and certain knowledge of God, as hath been deſcribed, doth neceſſarily ſuppoſe a very great elevation of our underſtandings, above what this ſtate of mortality can bear. We cannot now have a clear and immediate ſight of God, beauſe the weakneſs and imperfection of our preſent ſtate will not admit of it. In this life, our underſtandings are eaſily overborne by the luſtre and excellency of an object. Hence it was, that God ſaid to Moſes when he ſo earneſtly deſired to ſee his face, *thou canſt not ſee my face, and live,* Exod. xxxiii. 20. So tranſcendent and glorious a ſight would quite overwhelm and overcome our faculties; as the light of the ſun, if we look ſtedfaſtly and directly upon it, will dazzle and blind the ſtrongeſt eye. The ſight of ſo glorious a being as God is, of ſo much excellency, and happineſs, and perfection, as concenter in him, would fill us with joy and wonder, too great for frail mortality to bear; but in the ſtate of glory, the eye of the ſoul, that is our underſtanding faculty, ſhall be enlarged unto that capacity, and purified to that clearneſs, and elevated to that ſtrength, as to be able to receive and bear ſo much of the luſtre and glory of the divine nature and perfection, as is conſiſtent with the finiteneſs of a human underſtanding, and ſuitable to the perfection of a glorified ſoul; and our underſtandings ſhall then be raiſed and advanced to ſuch a ſtrength, that they ſhall be ſo far from being oppreſſed and burdened with the preſence of God, and from ſinking under the weight of his

his glory, that they ſhall be infinitely raviſhed and delighted with it.

2. *To ſee God as he is*, does imply our perfect enjoyment of him. We ſhall not only perfectly know him, but we ſhall take infinite pleaſure in him, in beholding his glory, in praiſing and admiring his goodneſs, in doing his will with all imaginable readineſs and chearfulneſs. I do not pretend to deſcribe to you the particularities of that ſtate, and all the bleſſed comforts and enjoyments of it; *it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*. God hath not told us, and none but he, who is the author and fountain of this happineſs, can diſcover it to us. Let it ſuffice us, that God hath aſſured us of it, and hath prepared it for us; and it can be no mean thing which the infinite wiſdom, and goodneſs, and power of God hath deſigned for the final reward of thoſe who love him, and of thoſe whom he loves. If we know thus much of it, that it is certain beyond all doubt, and vaſt beyond all imagination, we have nothing more to wiſh, but that God would fit us for it, and as ſoon as he pleaſeth, bring us to the enjoyment of it.

III. We will conſider the fitneſs of this metaphor, to expreſs to us the happineſs of our future ſtate. And that the ſcripture doth very much delight to ſet forth to us the bleſſedneſs of heaven, by this metaphor of ſeeing, it is evident from the frequent uſe of it in ſcripture, Matth. v. 8. *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *We ſhall ſee him face to face.* Heb. xii. 14. *Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* And here in the text, *We ſhall ſee him as he is.* And indeed God is pleaſed, in ſcripture, to make ſenſible deſcriptions of the happineſs and miſery of another world, and by way of accommodation to our underſtandings, and condeſcenſion to the weakneſs and imperfections of this ſtate, to ſet forth heaven and hell to us by ſuch things as are ſenſible; and that not only to help our underſtandings to a more eaſy conception of things, but likewiſe to move and rouze our affections, which while we are in the body, and immerſed in ſenſe, are commonly moſt powerfully wrought upon, by ſenſible repreſentations of things.

And

And therefore hell is described to us by such things as affect the sense of feeling, because that is capable of the greatest and sharpest pain; and the enjoyments of heaven, by the sense of sight, because that is the noblest of all our senses; and the primary and proper object of it is most delightful, and of the most spiritual nature of any corporeal thing.

1. Sight is the noblest and most excellent of all our senses: and therefore the frame of the eye is the most curious of all other parts of the body, and the dearest to us, and that which we preserve with the greatest tenderness. When the Apostle would set forth the mighty affection which the Galatians bore to him, he says, *they would have plucked out their very eyes for him.* It is the most comprehensive sense, hath the largest sphere, takes in the most objects, and discerns them at the greatest distance. It can in a moment pass from earth to heaven, and survey innumerable objects. It is the most pure, and spiritual, and quickest in its operations, and approacheth nearest to the nature of a spiritual faculty. Of all our senses, it carries the greatest evidence and certainty along with it, and the reports of it are the most certain and unquestionable. Hence we use to say, that one eye-witness is more than ten ear-witnesses. When Job would express to us the most perfect knowledge of God, he does it by sight, Job xlii. 5. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes see thee:* that is, he had a more perfect and clear discovery of God and his perfections, than ever he had before. And, to mention but one thing more, it is that sense which is more apt to work upon our affections.

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,
Quàm quæ sunt oculis commissa fidelibus;

"The things which we hear reported, are not so apt "to move our pity, or anger, or love, as the things "which we see with our eyes." So that in all these respects, of the dignity and excellency, the largeness and comprehensiveness, the spirituality and quickness, the evidence and certainty of this sense, and the power it hath to raise our affections, it is the fittest to represent to us

the nobleſt employment and operation of our ſouls in the ſtate of glory.

2. The primary and proper object of this ſenſe, is the moſt delightful, and of the moſt ſpiritual nature of any corporeal thing, and that is light. *The light of the eye rejoiceth the heart*, Prov. xv. 30. *Light is ſweet, and a pleaſant thing it is for the eye to behold the ſun*, Eccleſ. xi. 7. It is the pureſt and moſt ſpiritual of all corporeal things, and therefore God chuſeth to repreſent himſelf by it: *God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all.*

And thus I have done with the ſecond thing I propounded to ſpeak to, namely, that thus much in general we certainly know of the happineſs of our future ſtate, that it ſhall conſiſt in *the ſight of God.* I ſhould now proceed to the third thing, namely, wherein our likeneſs to God ſhall conſiſt: But this I ſhall refer to another opportunity.

SERMON CLXXXVI.

Of the happineſs of good men, in the future ſtate.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN theſe words, are four things worthy of our conſideration.

Firſt, The preſent obſcurity of our future ſtate, as to the particular circumſtances of that happineſs which good men ſhall enjoy in another world; *it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be.*

Secondly, What we know of it in general; that it ſhall con-

consist in the perfect knowledge and enjoyment of God; both which are comprehended in that expression, *We shall see him as he is.*

Thirdly, Wherein our likeness and conformity to God shall consist; *This we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.*

Fourthly, The necessary connection between our likeness and conformity to God, and our sight and enjoyment of him. The two first of these I have spoken to. I shall now proceed to the

Third, namely, Wherein our likeness and conformity to God shall consist, *We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him:* In these two things, in the immortality of our nature, and in the purity of our souls.

I. In the immortality of our nature. In this mortal state, we are not capable of that happiness which consists in the vision of God, that is in the perfect knowledge and perpetual enjoyment of him. The imperfection of our state, and the weakness of our faculties, cannot bear the sight of so glorious and resplendent an object, as the divine nature and perfections are: *We cannot see God and live.* The frailty of our mortal condition is unequal to sustain so great a weight of glory; to be sure it is incapable of eternal felicity: Nothing but an immortal nature can be happy for ever. And therefore the scripture tells us, that when our bodies shall be raised, the quality and condition of them shall be quite altered, and that our blessed Saviour shall by his almighty power, make a mighty change in them from what they were in this mortal state: Phil. iii. 20, 21. *Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.* And the Apostle tells us more particularly wherein this change doth consist, 1 Cor. xv. 42. *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.* These corruptible, and vile, and weak, and gross bodies which we wear and carry about us for a while, and at last put off, and lay down

in the grave, ſhall by the power of God at the reſurrection be refined and advanced into ſpiritual and vigorous, glorious and immortal bodies. Our bodies are now but a tabernacle, a temporary and moveable dwelling, that ſhall ſhortly be taken down; but at the reſurrection, they ſhall become a fixed and ſettled habitation, a houſe that ſhall never decay, nor come to ruin. So the Apoſtle tells us, 2 Cor. v. 1. *We know that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God, a houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* And when this bleſſed change ſhall be made, *Mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up of life; for this corruptible muſt put on incorruption, and this mortal muſt put on immortality.* And there is a neceſſity of this, in order to our perfect happineſs. For that is not a perfect happineſs, which ſhall expire and have an end; which it muſt have, if we were ſtill liable to mortality. And therefore the Apoſtle is peremptory, that there muſt be ſuch a change, becauſe our bodies as they are now conſtituted and framed, are utterly incapable of the happineſs of the next life. Ver. 50. *Now this I ſay, brethren, that fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* Where by *fleſh and blood*, the Apoſtle does not mean, as many have imagined, our ſinful and impure nature; but our frail and mortal nature, conſiſting of ſuch groſs materials as fleſh and blood are, for the maintenance and ſupport of which, there is continual need of new recruits and freſh ſupplies of nouriſhment by meat and drink. Such a nature as this, which is neceſſarily mortal, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*, which is a ſtate of perpetual and endleſs happineſs. And that the Apoſtle means this by the phraſe of *fleſh and blood*, is evident beyond all doubt, from the next words which he adds by way of explication of what he had ſaid, *This, I ſay, brethren, fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* That which is liable to death and corruption, is not capable of immortal glory and happineſs. And therefore our nature muſt be made immortal; and immortality makes us like to God, and is an evident teſtimony and declaration that we are *the Sons of God. We are now the children of God*, in reſpect of our title to a future inheritance;

tance; but this is hid from the world; but at the resurrection, when we shall bear the image of his immortality, this will be an evident mark of our being *the sons of God*. As our blessed saviour was *mightily declared to be the son of God, by his resurrection from the dead*; so likewise shall his members be declared to be *the children of God*, by that glorious change that shall be made in them at the resurrection, when *thi smortal shall put on immortality*. Then we are the *sons of God* indeed in an eminent manner, when *we can die no more*.

And therefore it is worth our observation, that the scripture gives us the title of *the children of God*, more especially upon this account, Luke, xx. 35, .36. *But they which shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, can die no more, but are equal to the Angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*. And Rom. viii. 19. the resurrection is called, *The manifestation of the sons of God*. And ver. 21. *Our being delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God*. And ver. 23. it is called, our *adoption, or sonship; We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption*, viz. *the redemption of our bodies*. This is the first thing, wherein our likeness and resemblance to God in our future state of happiness shall consist, the immortality of our nature, without which we could not be capable of the blessed vision of God, and the everlasting enjoyment of him.

II It shall consist in the purity of our souls. Now purity is a freedom from sin, which is the great stain and defilement of the soul. Before we can be admitted into heaven, we must be quit of all those vitious and corrupt inclinations, of all those inordinate desires and passions, which defile our souls, and render us unlike to God. In this world, every good man does mortify his earthly and corrupt affections, and in some measure bring them into obedience and subjection to the law of God. But still there are some relicks of sin, some spots and imperfections in the holiness of the best men.

But upon our entrance into the other world, we shall quite put off the old man with the affections and lusts thereof; we shall be perfectly delivered from this body

of ſin and death, and together with this mortal nature part with all the remainders of ſin and corruption, which cleave to this mortal ſtate. For till our earthly houſe of this tabernacle be diſſolved, we ſhall never be wholly cleanſed from the leproſy of ſin. While we are in this world, we muſt be continually *cleanſing our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* But we ſhall never be wholly cleanſed, we ſhall never be perfectly holy in this life; but in the other ſtate, all ſin and imperfection ſhall be done away, and we ſhall be preſented to God, without ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing. And perfect holineſs is the image of God, and the very neareſt reſemblance of the divine nature, that creatures are capable of.

But how our ſouls ſhall be purified from thoſe remainders of ſin and dregs of corruption, which are in the beſt men, while they are in this world, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould be able perfectly to explain. It ought to be ſufficient to us, that he who hath promiſed it, is able to do it one way or other; only I am confident, and have great reaſon to be ſo, that this purification will not be wrought by the fire of purgatory. For if there be any ſuch thing, as there is not the leaſt ſpark of divine revelation for it, (and how any body ſhould come to know it otherwiſe, is not eaſy to imagine) it is granted to be a material fire; and if it be ſo, it is no ways fitted, either for the puniſhment or purgation of impure ſouls. Indeed if men carried their bodies into purgatory, the fire of it might be a cruel torment and vexation to them; but how a fire ſhould ſcorch a ſpirit, is, I believe, beyond the ſubtilty of a ſchoolman to make out; much leſs is it fitted to purge and take away ſin. And if the truth were known, it was never ſeriouſly intended for this purpoſe, to do any good to the dead, but to drain the purſes of the living, by deluding them with a vain hope of getting their friends delivered out of that imaginary torment.

But we who take our faith from the word of God, and not from the fictions of men, do believe that the ſouls of good men do immediately paſs out of this world into a ſtate of happineſs; and that he who beſtows this happineſs upon them, does qualify them for it, before he admits

admits them into it. And if we conſider the matter well, we ſhall find that a man who hath truly repented of his ſins, and through the mercy of God in Jeſus Chriſt hath obtained of God the pardon and forgiveneſs of them, and is firmly reſolved againſt ſin, and doth truly endeavour to mortify his luſts, and to lead a holy life, and by the grace of God does *deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and lives ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in this preſent world;* I ſay, we ſhall find that ſuch a man is not far from the kingdom of God, but very nearly qualified and diſpoſed for it; and that there hardly wants any thing to make ſuch a man perfectly good, but only to remove out of his way thoſe obſtacles and impediments to virtue, and to free him from thoſe circumſtances of infirmity and temptation, which do unavoidably encompaſs us in this world; ſuch as are ignorance, and the inſtigations of our bodily temper to irregular appetites and paſſions, that which the Apoſtle calls, *The law in our members warring againſt the law of our minds;* the neceſſities of this life, the temptations of the devil and of bad company, and the like; all which do appertain to this ſtate, and which we ſhall be quit of ſo ſoon as we leave this world, and put off theſe frail and mortal bodies; and when theſe are removed, we are free from the bondage of ſin, and have nothing to hinder and divert that ſtrong bent and inclination of mind which is in every good man, to do the will of God. So that our very tranſlation into another ſtate does of itſelf aſſert us into this glorious liberty of the ſons of God. And if beſides this any thing more be neceſſary to cleanſe us from ſin, and perfect the holineſs and purity of our ſouls, we need not be ſolicitous about the way and manner of it, but may reſt confident, that *he who hath begun a good work in us, will perfect it in the day of Chriſt;* and that what is wanting in our love to God, or charity to men, in goodneſs, and meekneſs, and purity, or any grace or virtue whatſoever, ſhall then be added to them, that *ſo an entrance may be miniſtred to us abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. This we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him;* like him in the immortality of our nature, and in the purity of our ſouls,

which

which are the very image of God, and the moſt expreſs character of the divine nature. The

Fourth and laſt thing remains, which is to ſhew the neceſſary connexion which is between our likeneſs and conformity to God, and our ſight and enjoyment of him: *We know that we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* Which implies, that unleſs we be like God, we are in no capacity of the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of him.

I. Likeneſs to God, in the immortality of our nature, is neceſſary to make us capable of the happineſs of the next life; which conſiſts in the bleſſed and perpetual viſion and enjoyment of God. If our natures were mortal, we were incapable of ſeeing God. What was ſaid of Moſes, is equally true of all mankind, in this ſtate of mortality. *We cannot ſee the face of God and live.* Nothing that is frail and dying can endure the ſplendor of ſo great a glory; nothing that ſtands in need of continual reparation as fleſh and blood does, can inherit the kingdom of God; nothing but a fixt and immutable nature, which can never decay, is capable of everlaſting happineſs.

But this part of likeneſs and conformity to God, though it be neceſſary to make us capable of the felicity of another world, yet it is no part of our duty and care: If we endeavour after the other, which conſiſts in holineſs and purity, God will work this in us, and for us, without any concurrence of ours, All that he requires of us is, that we firmly believe it, and patiently expect it, and fervently pray for it, and aſpire after it. And indeed our likeneſs to God in this reſpect, depends upon our conformity to him in purity and holineſs. For *as by ſin death entered into the world, and ſo death paſſed upon all men;* ſo nothing but holineſs can reſtore us to immortality.

The foundation of all our hopes of a bleſſed immortality, is to be laid in the price of our redemption, as the meritorious cauſe of it, and in our being *renewed after the image of God, in righteouſneſs and true holineſs,* as the proper qualification and capacity for it on our parts. We muſt have our fruit unto holineſs, if we look that the end ſhould be everlaſting life. And to this

this purpose it is excellently said in the wisdom of Solomon, the keeping of *God's commandments is the assurance of immortality, and immortality makes us like to God.* And therefore I shall mainly apply myself to the

II. Thing, namely, To shew that our likeness to God in the purity of our souls, is necessary to make us capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of him in the next life. It is necessary as a condition of the thing; and it is necessary as a qualification in the person.

1. It is necessary as a condition of the thing to be performed on our part, before we can expect that God should make good the promise of eternal life and happiness to us. The express constitution and appointment of God hath made it necessary, who hath told us, *without holiness no man shall see him; that if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the spirit,* (that is) if we be sanctified and renewed, *we shall of the spirit reap everlasting life.* And if this were a mere arbitrary condition, imposed upon us by the sovereign will of God, without any necessity from the nature of the thing; yet we ought to accept it; as a very easy condition; when he hath only said, as the Prophet did to Naaman, *wash and be clean.* Certainly no man can refuse so great a benefit and blessing conferred upon such cheap and tolerable terms. God hath promised us eternal life; a mighty blessing indeed! for the obtaining of which, no condition that is possible can be thought hard and unreasonable. And what does he require of us for the obtaining of it, but that we *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God?* that is, that we do with all care and diligence abstain from sin, and endeavour to live a holy life; to conform ourselves to the will of God, and to be obedient to his laws. He does not require perfect holiness of us in this life, but a sincere endeavour after it, and he hath promised to assist our endeavour; and if we go as far as we can, he will perfect what is wanting. So that there is nothing in all this but what is very possible for every man to do, by the assistance of that grace which he hath promised to afford us; and if it be possible, we cannot answer our neglect

neglect of it, when all our hopes of happiness depend upon it. But this is not all; there is yet,

2. A farther necessity of it, inwardly to qualify and dispose us for the sight and enjoyment of God. We cannot possibly love God, nor take delight in him, unless we be like him in the temper and disposition of our minds. If we would know what will make us happy, we must look upon the great pattern of happiness, and that is God himself; who, as he is the most powerful, and wise, and every way perfect, so he is the happiest being in the world. So that if we would be happy, we must be like God. We cannot be so perfect as he is, and therefore we cannot be so happy; but if we would be as happy as creatures are capable of being, we must endeavour to be as like God as it is possible for creatures to be.

We must resemble him as near as we can, in those perfections wherein he is imitable by us. And these are, as I may call them, the moral perfections of his nature, which the scripture usually comprehends under the name of holiness; his goodness, and patience, and mercy, and justice, and truth, and faithfulness; and these, as they are the great glory, so the chief felicity of the divine nature.

Goodness is a perfection of itself, though it were without any great degree of knowledge or power. A poor man, and one that is ignorant in comparison of others, may yet be a very good man. But power and knowledge separated from goodness, are not perfections, but may be applied to the worst and most mischievous purposes; as we see in the devil, who hath both these qualities in a high degree.

If we could suppose an omnipotent and all-knowing being that were destitute of goodness, he would not only be troublesome to others, but uneasy to himself. Without goodness there can be no happiness. So that those perfections which contribute most to the happiness of the divine nature, are the easiest to be imitated by us. We may be like God in his holiness, that is, in his goodness, and patience, and mercy, and righteousness, and truth. And these perfections are the very temper and disposition of happiness; for they are the

nature

nature of God, who is therefore essentially happy, because he is a being constituted of these perfections. And so far as we imitate God in these, we are *partakers of a divine nature; we dwell in God, and God in us.* So our Apostle tells us in the 4th chapter, verse 16. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* These divine qualities make us fit company for our heavenly Father, and capable of the joys of heaven, and the delights of that glorious place.

And the contrary temper and disposition is the nature of the devil, and the very thing which makes it impossible for him to be happy. Malice, and envy, and revenge, are unquiet passions; and in what nature soever they are, they are as vexatious and tormentful to itself, as they are troublesome and mischievous to others. These are a hell within us, and are as natural causes of misery, as bodily diseases are of pain and restlessness; and while these furies are in us, nothing without us can make us happy.

The capacity and foundation of all felicity must be laid in the inward frame of our minds, in a god-like temper and disposition. Till the image of his holiness and goodness, which hath been defaced by sin, be renewed upon our minds, we are utterly incapable of the enjoyment of the first and chief good, in which all our felicity does consist.

And thus you see what a necessary connexion there is between our likeness and conformity to God, and the blessed vision and enjoyment of him. All that now remains, is to draw some inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this argument, and so I shall conclude.

I. This shews us, how impossible it is to reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of heaven. The terms of our happiness are firmly and immutably fixed, like *the foundation of the earth, which cannot be moved;* nay, sooner may *heaven and earth pass away,* than a wicked man enter into the kingdom of heaven. If we continue in a sinful and impenitent state, we must necessarily *come short of the glory of God.* And therefore all those devices which men have found out, to excuse themselves from a holy life, and yet to maintain hopes of getting to heaven at last, are but foolish arts of security, and tricks

to

to undo ourſelves quietly, and without any great diſturbance. Some think to be ſaved by an external profeſſion of religion, though it have no force and efficacy upon their lives: ſome by being of the only true church wherein ſalvation is to be had: and yet if it were true, that there were any one party or community of Chriſtians, out of which there were no ſalvation, I am ſure this likewiſe is true, that there is no church wherein a wicked man can be ſaved.

Others rely upon abſolutions and indulgences, and hope, notwithſtanding all the unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of their lives, to do their buſineſs at laſt that way. But can any man be ſo fooliſh, as to think that any church or prieſt can forgive a man upon other terms, than thoſe upon which only God hath declared he will forgive ſinners?

Others hope to be ſaved by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, without any of their own. But what a preſumption is this, to think that any thing that Chriſt hath done for us, will avail us while we cheriſh our luſts, and live in the contempt of his laws? *Let no man deceive you; he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as he is righteous.* The righteouſneſs of Chriſt ſhall never be imputed to any for their juſtification, but thoſe who are *ſanctified by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.*

So that nothing can be vainer than a wicked man's hopes of heaven. The whole deſign of the goſpel is, to convince men that bleſſedneſs belongs only to the righteous, and that no man that allows himſelf in any wickedneſs and impiety of life, ſhall have any *inheritance in the kingdom of God and Chriſt.*

II. The conſideration of the indiſpenſible neceſſity of our likeneſs and conformity to God in holineſs and purity, to make us capable of the happineſs of the next life, calls loudly upon us, to endeavour after it in this life. So it follows in the words immediately after the text, *we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.* It is true indeed, nothing but perfect holineſs makes us capable of the enjoyment of God, and we cannot be perfectly holy in this life. But then we are to conſider, that if we do not purify ourſelves

ſelves in ſome meaſure in this world, if we do not begin this work here, it will never be perfected hereafter; ſuch diſpoſitions as we carry with us out of this world, ſtick by us for ever. Indeed if they be good, the degree of them ſhall be perfected; but if they be bad, they ſhall never be altered. If the *image of God be renewed upon us* in this life, *we ſhall be changed from glory to glory*, in the other, *by the ſpirit of the Lord.* But if we be utterly unlike God when we die, death will make no change in us for the better; we ſhall *go to our place, and inherit the portion of ſinners.* We did not endeavour to be like God, and therefore we can never be admitted to the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of him; for there is a direct and eternal oppoſition between the holy nature of God, and an impure creature; and till this oppoſition be removed, we can have no communion with him. And it is too late to take away this oppoſition between God and an impure ſoul in the other world; becauſe our condition is then concluded, and we ſhall remain for ever ſuch as we have made ourſelves, while we were in this world.

Now is the time, *this is the day of ſalvation.* Now we may repent and leave our ſins, and purify ourſelves; and by purity make ourſelves like to God, and by our likeneſs to him render our ſouls capable of being admitted to the bleſſed ſight of him, *in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right-hand are pleaſures for evermore.*

So that we ought to reſolve upon one of theſe two things; either to give over all thoughts of happineſs in another world; or to qualify ourſelves for it, by *purifying ourſelves, as God is pure:* for till we are like God, we are not capable of enjoying him. While we live *in ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts*, we are as unlike God as is poſſible; and there are but two ways imaginable, whereby to bring a conformity and likeneſs between God and us, either by changing God or ourſelves. Now the nature of God is fixed and immutable, he cannot recede from his holy nature; therefore we muſt leave our ſins. It is certain we cannot change God; therefore we muſt endeavour to change ourſelves. Rather think of purifying thy corrupt nature, which may be done; than of

making any alteration in God, *with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.*

Once God hath condescended so far, as to take our nature upon him, to bring us to a participation of his own divine nature, and make us capable of happiness: but if this will not do, we must not expect that God will put off his own nature to make us happy.

SERMON CLXXXVII.

Preached at WHITEHALL, 1686.

The wisdom of religion justified in the different ends of good and bad men.

PROV. xiv. 32.

The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.

SOlomon, all along this book of the Proverbs, doth recommend to us religion, and the fear of God, by the name, and under the notion of wisdom, Chap. i. 7. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.* Chap. ix. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

Hereby signifying to us, that religion is the fundamental principle of wisdom, by which our whole life, and all the actions of it, ought to be conducted and governed; and that all wisdom which doth not begin here, and lay religion for a foundation, and which doth not act upon supposition of the truth of the principles of religion, *viz.* the belief of a God, and his providence, of the immortality of our souls, and the rewards and punishments of another life, is but *wisdom falsly so called;* because it is preposterous, and begins at the wrong end, and proceeds upon a false supposition, and wrong scheme

scheme of things; and consequently our whole life, and all the actions and designs of it, do run upon a perpetual mistake, and false statings of our own case; and whatever we do pursuant to this mistake, is foolish in itself, and will be fatal in the issue and consequence of it.

For he that takes it for granted that there is no God, and that the world is not governed by the providence of any superior being, but by chance; that his soul dies with his body, and that there is no life after this: He that proceeds upon these principles, is free from all fetters and obligations of conscience, and hath no reason to regard any rule of right and justice, of virtue and goodness, further than they conduce to his own ease and pleasure, his convenience and safety in this world; he hath nothing to do, but to contrive his own present happiness, and to live as long as he can; and because he knows he must die, to compose himself to undergo it as contentedly, and to bear the pain of it as chearfully and patiently, and to act this last part as decently as he can, being secured by his own principles against all future misery and danger, because death makes an utter end of him.

This is a very consistent theory, and hath but one fault, that it is not true at the bottom, and will fail us when we come to lay our whole weight upon it. It is just as the prophet describes *the staff of the broken reed of Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it.* Such are the principles of infidelity, to all that trust in them; when they should stand us in most stead, and when we come to lean hard upon them, they will not only fail us, but go into our very heart, and pierce it with sharp pain and anguish. In the days of our health and prosperity, the spirit of a man may bear up itself by its own natural force and strength; and false principles are like anticks in a building, which seem to crouch under the weight of an arch, as if they bore it up, when in truth they are borne up by it. But when these men fall into any great calamity, or death makes towards them in good earnest, then is the trial of these principles, of what strength they are, and what weight they will bear; and we commonly see, that they do not

only fail those who trust in them, but they vanish and disappear like dreams and mere illusions of the imagination, when a man awakes out of sleep; and the man, that was borne up by them before with so much confidence, can now feel no substance and reality in them; he cannot now be an atheist if he would; but God, and the other world, begin to be as great realities to him, as if they were present to his bodily eye. And now the principles of infidelity are so far from ministring any comfort and good hopes to him, that they fill him with horror, and anguish, and despair; and are so far from quieting his mind, that there is nothing but storm and tempest there. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.* *The wicked*, that is, the sinner, the hardened and impenitent sinner, *is driven away*; which may either signify the sudden and violent end many times of bad men; they are carried away, as it were, by a tempest, answerable to that expression, Prov. x. 25. *As the whirlwind passeth, so the wicked is no more*: or else the word may signify, to be cast down and dejected; and then it imports that trouble and despondency of mind, that anguish and despair, which ariseth from the guilt of a wicked life. *Is driven away in his wickedness*; the word in the original is, *in his evil*, which may either refer to the evil of sin, or of affliction and calamity, and it will come much to one in which sense we take it. According to the first sense of the word *evil*, the meaning will be, that the sinner, when he comes to die, is in great trouble and despondency of mind, because of his wicked life; hath no comfort, no good hopes concerning his future state, according to that other saying of Solomon, Prov. xi. 23. *The expectation of the wicked is wrath.* If we take the word *evil* in the latter sense, for the evil of affliction and calamity, then the meaning is, that bad men, when they fall into any great evil and calamity, more especially upon the approach of death, (for that, as the last and greatest of evils, is probably intended, as appears by the opposition in the next words, *the righteous hath hope in his death;*) I say, that bad men, when they fall into any great evil or calamity, especially upon the approach of death, are full of trouble and dis-

quiet,

quiet, by reason of their guilt, and destitute of all comfort and hope in that needful time. And this is most agreeable to the opposite part of this proverb or sentence, *but the righteous hath hope in his death;* that is, the good man, when any evil and calamity overtakes him, though it be the most terrible of all, death itself, is full of peace, and comfort, and good hopes; when there is nothing but storms without, all is calm within, he hath something which still supports him and bears him up.

So that Solomon, in this sentence or proverb, seems to design to recommend religion and virtue to us, from the consideration of the different ends of good and bad men, so obvious to common observation, and generally speaking, and for the most part, which (as I have often observed) is all the truth that is to be expected in moral and proverbial speeches; that for the most part, the end of good men is full of peace and comfort, and good hopes of their future condition; but the end of bad men quite contrary, full of anguish and trouble, of horror and despair, without peace or comfort, or hope of any good to befal them afterwards. The righteous man hath great peace and serenity in his mind at that time; is not only contented, but glad to die; does not only submit and yield to it, but desires it as much better. And so some read the words, *the righteous desires or hopes to die:* but the wicked man and the sinner dreads the thoughts and approaches of death, quits life with great reluctancy, clings to it, and hangs upon it as long as he can, and is not without great violence parted from it. The good man goes out of the world willingly and contentedly; but the wicked is *driven away*, not without great force and constraint, with much reluctancy, and in great trouble and perplexity of mind, what will become of him for ever.

You see the meaning of the words, that they contain a great truth, and very well worthy of our most attentive regard and consideration; because, if this be generally and for the most part true, which Solomon here asserts, then this is a mighty testimony on the behalf of piety and virtue, and plainly shews, that the principles of religion and virtue are proof against all assaults to which human nature is liable: and that the principles of infi-

delity and vice do shrink and give back when it comes to the trial. And this, to any wise and considerate man, is as good as a demonstration, that the religious man is in the right, and proceeds upon principles of sound and true wisdom, and *hath chosen the better part*: but that the infidel and the wicked man is in the wrong, and under a fatal mistake, which he seldom discerns, till it be too late to rectify it.

Now in the handling of this argument, I shall do these three things;

First, I shall shew, that this observation of Solomon, concerning the different end of good and bad men, and the final issue and event of a virtuous and vitious course of life, is generally true, and that the exceptions on either side to the contrary are but few, and not of force to infringe the truth of the observation.

Secondly, I shall consider whence this difference proceeds, and I shall endeavour to shew that it is founded in the true nature and reason of things. And,

Thirdly, That if this be true, it is a demonstration on the side of religion, and does fully justify the wisdom of it.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, that this observation of Solomon, concerning the different end of good and bad men, and the final issue and event of a virtuous and vitious course of life, is generally found true, and that the exceptions on either side to the contrary are but few in comparison, and by no means of sufficient force to infringe the general truth of this observation; I say, that this observation of the wise man is generally and for the most part true, which (as I mentioned before) is all the truth that is to be expected in moral and proverbial sentences. And for this I appeal to the common and daily experience of mankind, whether we do not generally see religious and good men to have great ease and comfort, and sometimes great joy and transport in their minds, from the reflection upon an innocent and useful, an holy and virtuous course of life. David was so confident of this, that he appeals to common observation and experience for the truth of it, Psal. xxxvii. 37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.* Or as this

this text is rendered in our old translation, *keep innocency, take heed to the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last.* And he gives the reason of this, ver. 39. because God stands by them to support them in this needful time, with the comfortable hopes of his salvation; *the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, he is their help in the time of trouble.* As they have sincerely endeavoured to serve God, so they have great hopes and confidence of his mercy and goodness to them, that he will stand by them, and support them in their greatest distress, and guide and conduct them to happiness at the last; and in this confidence they can say with David, Psal. xvi. 8, 9, 11. *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right-hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right-hand there are pleasures for evermore.* And Psal. xxxi. 5. *Into thy hand I commit my spirit, O Lord God of truth.* And Psal. xlviii. 14. *This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.* And again, Psal. lxxiii. 23, 24, 25, 26. *Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right-hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Thus a good man, not only in the contemplation of death, and upon the approach of it, but even under the very pangs of it, is apt to comfort himself in the divine mercy and goodness, and to rejoice in the hopes of the glory of God.

But the wicked, on the contrary, when death makes its approach towards them, the guilt of their wicked lives flies in their faces, and disturbs their minds, and fills them with horror and amazement, with a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume them. The expectation of the wicked is wrath, saith Solomon, Prov. xi. 23. *What is the hope of the hypocrite*, that is, of the wicked man, *when God shall take away his soul?* Job xxvii. 8. In their life-time they

they neglected God and religion, and perhaps denied him, or said unto him with those in the xxi. chap. ver. 14. *depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;* and when they come to die, they find that God is departed from them. They have not the confidence to look up to him, or to expect any mercy or favour from him, being conscious to themselves, that they have denied the God which is above, or at least neglected and despised him; and now *the terrors of the Almighty take hold of them, and his arrows stick fast in them, and wound their consciences*, that they cannot pluck them out, or get rid of them; their spirits are ready to sink within them, and the principles of infidelity, which they once relied upon, now fail them, and instead of ministring any comfort and confidence to them, they pierce them to the heart, and are the greatest ground of their trouble and despair.

So that here is a very visible and remarkable difference between good and bad men when they come to die. Good men have commonly a great calm and serenity in their minds, are full of good hopes of the mercy and favour of God to them, and of the sense of his loving-kindness, which is better than life itself; and are willing to leave this world, in the comfortable expectation and assurance of a better condition after death; and not only willing, but many times heartily glad, that they are going out of this vale of tears, out of this sink of sin and sorrows, that they are quitting these drooping mansions, and exchanging these earthly tabernacles, for a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: whereas the wicked is full of trouble and anguish, and his mind in greater pain and disorder than his body; all storm and tempest, *like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest: there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* And *how can there be peace,* when his whoredoms and adulteries, his repeated acts of drunkenness and intemperance, his profane oaths and blasphemies, have been so many? When he is conscious to himself what a life he hath led, and is thoroughly awakened to a just sense of the evil of his doings? And when death makes up to him, how does he dread the sight and thoughts of it, and how does he hanker after life, as if all his happiness depended upon it, and

and ended with it? And at last, like the young man in the gospel, he goes away sorrowful, because, perhaps, he had great possessions in this world, and hath no hopes at all in the other. *This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God.*

There are, I confess, some exceptions to the contrary on both sides; but they are but few in comparison, and by no means sufficient to infringe the general truth of this observation.

On the other hand, some good men are very melancholy and dispirited, when they come to die, and leave the world full of fears and jealousies concerning their future condition; and this may proceed from several causes. Perhaps they are naturally of a dark and melancholy temper, which is usually heightened and increased by bodily weakness and distemper; and in this case it is no wonder, if the considerations of religion be not sufficient to scatter these clouds, and to over-rule and correct the irregularities of our bodily temper; because the principles and considerations of religion do not work naturally and by way of physick, but morally, and by way of conviction and counsel. Sometimes this fear and dejection of mind, in good men, proceeds from mere lowness and faintness of spirit, naturally caused by the load and continuance of the distemper which they labour under, and by which the mind is likewise in some degree weakened and broken; and when this happens, it is usually very visible, and consequently the account of it easy and obvious; and sometimes perhaps we are charitably mistaken in our good man, and either he is not a sincerely good man, or not so good as we took him to be; perhaps his life hath been very unequal, and full of great failings: and in either case, it is no wonder, if the man have not that peace and comfort, which is answerable to our good opinion of him; if this man be not sincerely good, there is no real foundation of peace and comfort; for *the hope of the hypocrite shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure,* as one of Job's friends speaks,

Job

Job viii. 14, 15. And ver. 20. *Behold, God will not cast away a perfect*, or sincere, *man; neither will he help*, or support, *the evil doers*. Or though he have been in the main a good man, yet perhaps with a great mixture of imperfection, and many great failings, and neglects; and and then it is no wonder, if his mind be not so calm, and clear of doubts and jealousies concerning his condition: for proportionably to the breaches and inequalities of our obedience, and our more and greater failings, will our peace and comfort, living and dying, be naturally abated and interrupted. But these cases are not many, it is sufficient that it is generally otherwise with good men, and that their end is peace. And this is so remarkable, that Balaam, when he was reckoning up the blessings and privileges of the people of Israel, the type of good men in all ages, he takes particular notice of their happy end, as a most signal and invaluable blessing; which made him break out into that wish, Numb. 23. 10. *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

And on the other hand, it cannot be denied, but that some very bad men (as bad as we can well imagine) have passed out of this world, not only quiet and undisturbed, but with a great deal of courage and resolution. And this I believe in fact and experience, at least according to my best observation, is the more rare case of the two, for a notorious bad man to die in perfect peace, than for a good man to die in great trouble and perplexity of mind. But this, when it happens, may probably enough be ascribed to one or more of these causes, either to the mistake of the by-standers, who take silence for peace; and because the man is of a strong resolution, and hath a good command of himself, and does not think fit to trouble others, in a matter in which he thinks they can give him no comfort and relief, they interpret this to be tranquillity of mind; because he holds his peace and says nothing, they think he hath peace, and that all is quiet within. But I remember the observation of a very wise historian, Phil. Comines, who says, that he knew in his time several great persons, who in ordinary conversation, and to a superficial view, seemed to be very happy and contented; but yet to them who knew them more

more intimately, and in their private freedoms and recesses, were the most miserable and discontented persons in the world. This I confess is very rare, for men to conceal a very great trouble, and more yet for a man to dissemble when dying; and yet there is reason to believe it sometimes happens.

Sometimes the quiet death of a very bad man proceeds from stupidity, and want of a just sense of the danger of his condition, and this from want of discipline and instruction in the nature and principles of religion: this temper looks like courage, because it is fearless of danger; but this fearlessness is founded in great ignorance and want of apprehension; whereas a true courage discerns the danger, and yet thinks it fit and reasonable to venture upon it. Now this stupidity of dying men, who have lived very ill, is commonly the case of such as have been brought up in great ignorance, and have lived in great sensuality, by which means their spirits are immersed, and even stifled in carnality and sense; and no wonder, if they who live like beasts, die after the same manner. And thus our Saviour represents the rich glutton in the parable, as never coming to himself, and a sense of his condition, till he was awakened by the flames of hell; Luke xvi. 22, 23. *The rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment.* As if he had never been awakened till then, his voluptuous and sensual course of life rendering him insensible of another world.

Or else this false peace may be ascribed to the delusion of false principles, by virtue whereof it is often seen, that men die in a very bad cause, not only without any regret and trouble, but with chearfulness and satisfaction; and this is not to be wondered at, because every man's conscience is a kind of God to him; and whether a man be in the right or wrong, so long as he thinks he does well, and his heart condemns him not, he is apt to have confidence towards God: but for all that, it greatly concerns every man to take great care to inform his conscience. For if men will not be impartial in their enquiry after truth, and be not ready to receive it in the love

love of it, St. Paul tells us, *that for this cause, God may send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, and that they might be damned, because they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*, 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12. that is, in falshood and imposture: for so the word ἀδικία, which is here rendered unrighteousness, is sometimes used in the New Testament.

And this is the last cause I shall mention, to which the false peace of wicked men when they come to die, is to be ascribed, *viz.* to the just judgment of God, who permits great sinners to be so hardened in an evil course, as neither living nor dying to be awakened to a sense of their condition; such as the Apostle speaks of, 1 Tim. iv. 2. who are said to have *their consciences seared as it were with a hot iron.* This, it is to be hoped, is but the case of a few, that are thus utterly forsaken of God, and left to perish in their own hardness and obstinacy. This is like a gangrene in the body, which mortifies the part, and leaves it without sense, and thereby incapable of recovery. I proceed in the

Second place, To shew whence this difference between good and bad men, when they come to die, does proceed. And here I shall endeavour to shew, that this difference is founded in the true nature and reason of the things themselves; in the nature of religion and virtue, and of impiety and vice; in the different ways and courses of good and bad men, which do naturally tend to these different ends.

And to make out this more clearly and distinctly, I shall endeavour to manifest these two things.

I. That a religious and virtuous life, is a real ground of peace and serenity of mind, of comfort and joy, under all the evils and calamities of life, and especially at the hour of death.

II. That impiety and wickedness is a real foundation of guilt and fear, of horror and despair in the day of adversity and affliction, and more especially in the approaches of death

I. That a religious and virtuous life is a real ground of peace and serenity of mind, of comfort and joy, under

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Under the evils and calamities of life, innocence is a great stay and support to our minds under sufferings, and will bear up our spirits when nothing else can: especially if a man suffer for a good conscience, and for righteousness sake: because then, beside the comfort of innocency, we are intitled in a special manner to the favour of God, and the comforts and supports of his holy Spirit, and the hopes of a glorious reward from that God, for whose sake and in whose cause we suffer. All trouble is tolerable to him who hath no burden of guilt upon his mind, to him who is at peace with his own conscience, and at peace with God, and is assured of his favour and friendship, of his providence and care, of his approbation and reward; this is a firm ground, not only of patience, but of joy to a good man, in the saddest and most dismal condition he can fall into. *Unto the upright* (saith the Psalmist) *there ariseth light in darkness*, Psal. cxii. 4. And no wonder, because he that fears God, and serves him faithfully, and suffers for him patiently, hath laid a sure foundation of comfort to himself, hath sown the seeds of contentment and peace, of joy and gladness in his own mind, which will spring up and flourish most, when we are in the most destitute and afflicted condition: *light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*, says David, Psal. xcvii. 11. *The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever*, saith the prophet, Isa. xxxii. 17.

And more especially at the hour of death, then the comfort of a good man overflows, and *he lifts up his head with joy, because his redemption draweth nigh*: then the reflection upon a well-spent and unspotted life fills his soul with abundant consolation, with joy unspeakable and full of glory; for God, and the things of another world, appear more real and substantial to him as he draws near to them, and this faith begins to be turned into sight and fruition; he now stands upon the confines of both worlds, and discerns more clearly the vanity and emptiness of that which he is going from, and the substantial and durable happiness of that which he is en-

entering into. Here is the trial of our faith, and the proof of religion, by the real fruits and effects of it, in the peace and comfort which it gives to a good man, when he is leaving this world; so that when he walks through the valley of death, he fears no ill, and his hopes are then most lively and vigorous, when he is ready to give up the ghost: the voice of nature, and of every man's reason and conscience, as well as scripture, *says to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings: but wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.* Which brings me to the

IId thing, namely, That impiety and wickedness is a real foundation of guilt and fear, of horror and despair, in the day of adversity and affliction, and especially in the approaches of death.

And how can it be otherwise, when all inward support and comfort fail him, and all sorts of evil and calamity, inward and outward, assault him, and break in upon him at once? When the principles of infidelity fail him, and what he had made out so speciously to himself, vanisheth into nothing, *as a dream when one awakens, and as a vision in the night?* For when any calamity befals this man, God, who was not before in all his thoughts, then begins to appear terrible to him, and he cannot banish the thoughts and fear of him out of his mind. But how uncomfortable is this to be convinced there is a God when a man hath most need of him, and can least hope for his favour and pity?

But especially at the approach of death, what a sad preparation for that is an impious and wicked life? how does his conscience then fly in his face, and how bitter is the remembrance of those sins which he committed with so much pleasure and greediness? What a terror is the Almighty to him, and the apprehension of that vengeance that threatens him, and that eternal misery which is ready to swallow him up? and in the midst of all this anguish and horror, which naturally spring from an evil conscience and the guilt of a wicked life, he is destitute of all comfort and hope; he hath denied the God that is above, and now he dares not look up to him; his whole life hath been a continued affront to the

divine

divine Majesty, and an insolent defiance of his justice; and what hopes can he now reasonably have of his mercy? *Of the God that formed him, he hath been unmindful*, and hath used him with all the despite he could; and therefore he hath all the reason in the world to conclude that he that made him will not save him, *and he that formed him will have no mercy on him.* And this is the natural consequence of impiety and wickedness; it fills the soul of a dying sinner with trouble and anguish, with guilt and despair, when he is leaving the world, and puts him into the most dismal condition that can be imagined on this side hell, and very like to it, without comfort, and without hope. I proceed to the

Third and last thing I proposed, *viz.* that if this be true, it is a demonstration on the side of religion, and doth fully justify and acquit the wisdom of it, and that upon these three accounts:

I. Because the principles of religion, and the practice of them in a virtuous life, when they come to the last and utmost trial, do hold out, and are a firm and unshaken foundation of peace and comfort to us.

II. That they minister comfort to us in the most needful and desirable time.

III. That when men are commonly more serious, and sober, and impartial, and when their declarations and words are thought to be of greatest weight and credit, they give this testimony to religion and virtue, and against impiety and vice.

I. That the principles of religion, and the practice of them in a virtuous life, when they come to the last and utmost trial, do hold out, and are a firm and unshaken foundation of peace and comfort to good men, at that time. The belief of a God, and of his providence and care of good men, and *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; the persuasion of our immortality, and of the eternal recompence of another world; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and to purchase eternal life and happiness for those, *who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*: I say, the belief of these things is commonly most strong and vigorous in the

minds of good men, when they come to die; and they have then a more clear apprehension, and firm persuasion of the truth and reality of these things, than ever they had in any time of their lives, and find more comfort from them, more peace and joy in the belief of them. And this is the great time of trial, when death presents itself to us, and the terrors of it compass us about, whether upon occasion of persecution or sickness. These are the rains, and storms, and winds, which will try upon what foundation our peace and comfort is built; and nothing but the principles of religion, sincerely believed and practised, will make us firm and impregnable against these assaults. So our Saviour assures us, Mat. vii. 24, 25. *Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them;* that is, believes and practiseth my doctrine, *I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*

And on the contrary, the principles of infidelity and vice, are most apt to shrink and give back at such a time; nay, for the most part they vanish and disappear, and upon the apprehension of death, a new light, as it were, springs up in their minds, and things appear quite contrary to that scheme which they had formed, and which they had taken so much pains to maintain and make probable to themselves; and that hypothesis, which they had been so long a-building, appears now to have no foundation, and falls at once, and all their hopes together with it. And now the infidel believes and trembles, is sensible of his wicked life, and of the vengeance that hangs over him, and was never in his life half so well satisfied of the principles of infidelity, as he is now convinced of the contrary, to his infinite trouble and confusion, that there is a God, and another life after this, and a terrible punishment to the workers of iniquity.

And daily experience confirms to us the certainty and truth of this matter, and that there is this difference for the most part very visible in the temper and

and carriage of good and bad men, when they come to die.

II. The principles of religion and virtue do minister comfort to us in the most needful and desirable times; and on the contrary, the principles of infidelity and vice do not only fail us in this day of distress, but give great trouble to us at the most unseasonable time.

And this makes a mighty difference between the condition of these two sorts of persons; for when would a man desire to be at peace and quiet in his mind, but when his body is restless, and in pain? When would a man wish for strong consolation and hope, that anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, as the Apostle to the Hebrews calls it, but in that last and terrible conflict of nature, with the last of enemies, which is death? And when would a man dread trouble and anguish of mind, but at such a time, when he is hardly able to sustain his bodily pains and infirmities? If it be true of every day of our lives, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, much more of the day of death: it is enough surely to have that one enemy to encounter, at which nature startles, and our best reason can hardly furnish us with force enough for the conflict, even when the sting of death is taken away, I mean the guilt of an evil conscience: but when all evils assail a man at once, pains without and terrors within, a weak body, and a wounded spirit, an incurable disease, and intolerable despair, death ready to assault us, and hell following it; how unseasonable is the conjuncture of so many and so great evils? Wise men are wont to provide with great care against such a time, that they may not be oppressed with too many troubles at once; and therefore in the time of their health, they settle their worldly concernments, and make their wills that when sickness or death comes, they may have no care upon them, nothing to do but to die. This is a time, when all the force of our reason, and all the comfort and hope that religion can give, will be little enough to give us a quiet and undisturbed passage out of this world into the other: and we shall be very miserable, if the terrors and stings of a guilty conscience, and the pangs of death, do seize

upon us at once. And therefore a wise man would make it the business of his whole life, to prevent this unhappy concurrence of evils, so insupportable to human nature; and to render death, which is grievous and terrible enough of itself, as comfortable and easy as it is possible. For if there were nothing beyond this life, yet it were worth the while to provide for a quiet death; and if men were sure to be possessed of these passions of hope and fear, of comfort and despair, which usually attend good and bad men when they come to die, there is no man, that calculates things wisely, would, for all the pleasures of sin, forfeit the peace and comfort of a righteous soul, going out of the world full of the hopes of a blessed immortality; and endure the anguish and torment of a guilty conscience, and the amazing terrors of a despairing and dying sinner. This is a condition so sad and fearful, that a wise man would avoid it upon any terms.

III. When men are commonly more serious, and sober, and impartial, and their declarations and words are thought to be of the greatest weight and credit, they give this testimony to religion and virtue, and against impiety and vice.

It is generally seen, when men come to die, that the manner of their death is answerable to the course of their life; that the reflection upon a holy and virtuous life is a great ease and comfort to mens minds: and on the contrary, the guilt of a wicked life is apt to fly in their faces, and to disturb their minds, and fill them with horror. And this is a critical time, when the consciences of men are usually awake, and apt to pass an impartial judgment and censure upon themselves. And for this, the infidel may believe one of his own great authors, I mean Lucretius, who observes, that when men are in distress, and the apprehensions of death are upon them, religion doth then shew its force:

Acriùs advertunt animos ad religionem;

"The thoughts of it are then more pungent and powerful upon their minds."

Nam

Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Eliciuntur, & eripitur persona, manet res.

"Mens words then come from the bottom of their "hearts, the mask is taken off, and things then appear "to them as indeed they are."

Now, that when men are so impartial and in good earnest, when they stand upon the confines of both worlds, and can view them at once, when they are leaving this world, and are now no longer in danger of being blinded, or flattered, or tempted by it, and are just ready to pass into the other world, and so much the more likely to discern the reality of it, as they approach near to it; I say, that in these circumstances, men generally declare on the side of piety and virtue, and declaim most vehemently against their sins and vices; that generally speaking, and according to what is commonly seen in experience, the man who hath led a religious and virtuous life, is, when he comes to die, quiet and easy to himself, hath no regret at what he hath done, no severe and angry reflections upon the strict course of a virtuous life, his conscience doth not accuse or upbraid, or terrify him, for having lived *soberly, and righteously, and godly in this world*; nay, so far from this, that if he hath any trouble, it is not because he hath lived piously and virtuously, but because he hath not lived more so, because he hath come short of his duty, and hath been so imperfectly and inconstantly good: that generally dying men repent of their evil actions, and are troubled for them; but no man ever repented himself of serving God, and doing good. This surely is a great testimony on the side of religion and virtue, because it is the testimony not only of the friends to religion, but of those who have been the greatest enemies to it, and at a time when they are most likely to declare the inward sense of their minds, and to speak most impartially, without design or disguise. When the ungodly man and the sinner comes to lie upon a death-bed, he hath then other apprehensions of things than he had, or would own to have, in the days of his health and prosperity, and his soul is full of sadness and trouble, of perplexity and anguish, of fear and despair, because of the wicked and lewd life which

which he hath led. But why art thou so dismayed, man? Why so troubled and cast down, so restless and unquiet, so wretched and miserable in thine own thoughts?

If thou hast done well in renouncing the principles of religion, and breaking loose from all obligations of duty and conscience, in gratifying thine inclinations and lusts, why art thou now troubled at it? If thou wert in the right all the while, why dost thou not now stand to it, and justify thy actings, and bear up like a man? If the principles thou wentest upon were sound and firm, why dost thou not still take comfort and support from them? Why does thy heart faint, and thy spirit sink within thee? How comes thy imagination to be so disturbed with such frightful appearances, and to haunt thee continually with such vain and groundless terrors? Whence is it that those who have taken a contrary course, and lived a quite different life, have so much the advantage of thee in the comfort, and peace, and tranquillity of their minds when they come to die?

But if thou hast been in the wrong, and dost now discern real cause for so much trouble and fear, why didst thou not consider in time? Why wast thou not troubled sooner, when trouble would have done thee good, and a great part of the anguish which thou now feelest, and all the misery thou art so afraid of, might effectually have been prevented?

I think it is said by those who are concerned, to take off the force of this terrible objection against infidelity and a wicked life; that when men are in a dying condition, their spirits are low, and their understandings weak and disturbed, and their minds thrown off the hinges; and therefore it is no wonder if they want that firmness and resolution of spirit, that consideration and courage, which they had in the time of their health.

This is speciously said, and with some shew and appearance of reason: but it does by no means answer, and take off, the objection. For if this were a true reason at the bottom, why is it not true on both sides? Why are not both sorts of men, when they are sick and near to die, those who have lived piously and virtuously, as well as the loose and wicked livers, equally troubled? Why are they not disturbed and afraid alike? Hath not

sick-

sickness the same natural effect upon them, and does it not equally weaken and disorder their minds? But we see generally in experience a plain and remarkable difference between these two sorts of men, when they come to die; so plain, that it is not to be denied; and so remarkable, that there must be some considerable cause of it; and so general and constant, that it cannot without great folly and perverseness be imputed to chance. Now what can we imagine should be the reason of this palpable difference between good and bad men, when they are under the apprehensions of death, but this, that a pious and virtuous life is a real ground of peace and joy, of comfort and confidence at that time; and that impiety and wickedness are a real foundation of guilt and fear, of horror and despair in a dying hour: in a word, that the different ways and courses of good and bad men do naturally lead to these different ends, and produce these different effects?

Either this must be granted, and then the whole cause of infidelity and vice is yielded and given up at once; or else men must fly to that which seems the most unreasonable and extravagant paradox in the world, and does effectually give up the cause another way, *viz.* that a false opinion of things, and a mere delusion, is more apt to support the fainting spirits of a dying man, and to give him more comfort and hope in the day of distress, than a right and well-grounded persuasion.

But this, as I said before, does effectually give up the cause another way: for if this be true, then certainly they are rightest that are in the wrong; and religion, though it were a mistake, ought to be embraced and entertained by a wise man, because of this great benefit and comfort of it. If this be truly the case, then every wise man must say, Let me be so deceived; let it be my lot and portion, to live and die in so pleasant, and comfortable, and happy an error, as that of religion is.

So that whether religion be true or false, it must, according to this reasoning, be necessarily granted to be the only wise principle, and safe hypothesis for a man to live and die by. And this very thing, that it is so, is a strong evidence of the truth of religion, and even a demon-

demonstration of the real excellency of virtue; because no other supposition but that of religion does so clearly solve all appearances, and so fully and exactly answer the natural desires, and hopes, and fears of mankind. If the being of God, and the obligations of religion and virtue be admitted, this gives an easy account of the whole matter, and shews us, that sin and vice are the foundation of guilt and trouble; and that religion and virtue do naturally produce peace and comfort: for that is to be esteemed and reckoned the natural effect of any thing, which doth generally belong to the whole kind. If those who live religiously and virtuously, have generally peace and comfort when they come to die, and those who live wickedly are commonly full of guilt and remorse, of fear and perplexity at that time; this is reason enough to believe, that these are the natural effects of those causes; and that men, when they come to die, are, according as they have lived, afraid of the divine justice, and of the vengeance of another world, or confident of God's goodness, and the rewards of another life, is a strong argument of a superior being that governs the world, and will reward men according to their works; because no supposition but this doth answer the natural hopes and fears of men. And this likewise is an argument of the immortality of our souls, and of the rewards and punishments of another life; and as good a demonstration of the reality and excellency of religion and virtue, from these happy effects of it, as the nature of the thing is capable of.

And now, to make some reflections upon what has been said upon this argument:

First, The consideration of the different ends of good and bad men is a mighty encouragement to piety and a good life. Nothing in this world shews us so remarkable a difference between the righteous and the wicked, as a death-bed. Then a good man most sensibly enjoys the comfort of a good life, and *the peaceable fruits of righteousness*; and the sinner then begins to reap the bitter fruits of sin. What a difference is there then, between the comfort and trouble, the composure and disturbance, the hopes and fears of these two persons? And next to the actual possession of blessedness, the comfort-

comfortable hopes and expectation of it are the greatest happiness; and next to being plunged into it, the fearful apprehensions of eternal misery are the greatest torment. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness*, is violently hurried out of the world, full of guilt and trouble. What storms and tempests are then raised in his mind, from the fear of God's justice, and the despair of his mercy? But *the righteous hath hope in his death*. The reflection upon a holy and virtuous life, and the conscience of a man's uprightness and sincerity, are a spring of joy and peace to him, which refresheth his mind with unspeakable comfort and pleasure, under the very pangs of death. With what triumph and exultation of spirit doth the blessed Apostle St. Paul, upon the review of his labours and sufferings for God and his truth, speak of his dissolution? 2 Tim. iv. 6. 7. 8. *For I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.* He speaks with such a lively sense of it, as if he had his crown in his view, and were just ready to take hold of it. And what would not a man give, what would he not be contented to do and suffer, to be thus affected, when he comes to leave the world, and to be able to bear the thoughts of his death and dissolution with so composed and chearful a mind? And yet this is the natural and genuine effect of a holy and useful life. And that, which the same Apostle tells us was the ground of his rejoicing under sufferings, is likeways the comfort and support of good men at the time of their death. 2 Cor. i. 12. *Our rejoicing*, saith he, *is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.* All the holy and virtuous actions of our lives are so many seeds of peace and comfort to us at the hour of our death, which we shall more sensibly enjoy, when we come to depart this life. For then the consciences of men are apt to deal most freely and impartially with them; and *if our hearts do not*

not then condemn us, we may have comfort and confidence towards God.

I believe there are some very pious and good souls, who have lived very disconsolate, and full of doubtings, and been under a cloud the greatest part of their lives, who yet upon the approach of death, and just as they were leaving the world, have broken forth, as the sun sometimes doth just before his setting. I know it is not always thus; there are, I doubt not, some good men who go out of this world with little or no comfort; and yet so soon as they step into another world, are encompassed with *joy unspeakable and full of glory:* and though the comfort of such persons be not so early and forward, yet it cannot chuse but be extremely welcome: and it must needs put a doubting and trembling soul into a strange kind of extasy and ravishment, to be thus unexpectedly surprized with happiness.

Secondly, Since this is so great and evident a testimony of the truth and goodness of religion, is it not a strange thing, and to be wondered at, that true religion and virtue should be so little practised, and impiety and vice should so generally prevail in the world, against so many bars and obstacles, and against such invincible objections to the contrary? Not only against our inward judgment and conscience, but against the general sense and experience of men in all ages, the constant declarations and testimonies of dying men, both good and bad, when they are most serious, and their words are thought to be of greatest credit and weight; against the best and sobereſt reason of mankind, and their true interest and happiness; against the health of mens bodies, and, which is the most dear and valuable thing in the world, the peace and quiet of their minds; and that not only in the time of life and health, but in the hour of death, when men stand most in need of comfort and support: In a word, against the grain of human nature, and in despite of mens natural fears of divine vengeance, and to the defeating of all our hopes of a blessed immortality in another world, and against the inflexible nature and reason of things, by no art or endeavour of man, by no colours of wit, or subtilty of discourse, by no practice or custom to the contrary, by

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no conspiracy or combination of men, ever to be changed or altered? So that we may say with David, *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge*, no consideration of themselves, no tenderness and regard to their present and future interest? Nay, if there were no life after this, setting aside the case of extreme suffering and persecution, religion and virtue are certainly to be chosen, not only for our contentment in life, but for our comfort in death: and if there be a state of happiness or misery remaining for men after death, as most assuredly there is, much more in order to the attaining of that endless happiness, and the avoiding of that eternal and intolerable misery, *O that men were wise, that they understood this, and would consider their latter end!*

SERMON CLXXXVIII.

The usefulness of considering our latter end.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THE title of this psalm tells us who was the author of it. It is called, *A prayer of Moses, the man of God*; or, as the Chaldee paraphrase more expressly, *The prayer which Moses, the prophet of the Lord, prayed, when the people of the house of Israel sinned in the wilderness*. Upon which provocation of theirs, God in great displeasure threatened, and was immutably resolved, that they should all perish in the wilderness, and that none of the men that came out of Egypt, Caleb and Joshua only excepted, should enter into the promised land, but should all die in the space of forty years.

Upon this occasion, Moses made this psalm or prayer

to God, being a devout meditation upon the shortness and frailty of human life, which was now brought into a much narrower compass than in former ages. But the case of that people was different from that of the rest of mankind, being limited and confined to *forty years*. They might die sooner than that time; but that was the utmost bound of their lives, which none were to exceed; which seems to be the ground and reason of the petition, which Moses puts up to God in the text, *So teach us*, &c.

For I do not think that Moses does here beg of God, to reveal to every one of them the precise end and term of his life; that might seem to savour of too much presumption or curiosity: but since they knew that according to the ordinary course of nature, the life of man was then reduced to *threescore and ten, or fourscore years*; and since God by a peremptory sentence had pronounced, that, two persons only excepted, all that vast number which came out of Egypt, and even Moses himself, should die within the compass of *forty years*; it was a very pious and proper request, which Moses here puts up for himself and the rest of that people, that God would give them wisdom to make a right use of the notice which they had of their end, since it might happen at any time, but could not reach beyond *forty years*, reckoning from the time of their coming out of Egypt.

To know the determinate time of our life, or to know certainly that our life shall not exceed such a term, (which was the case of the Israelites in the wilderness) is a very awakening thing, and does commonly rouze men more than the general consideration of our own frailty and mortality. And yet to a wise and considerate man, it ought in reason to be the same: for that which will certainly be, ought to be reckoned upon and provided for; and if it be uncertain when it will be, whether at some distance, or the next moment, we ought presently to take care about it, and to be always in a readiness for it, lest we should be surprized and overtaken.

And then this prayer is as proper for us, as it was for Moses and the Israelites, though we are not just under

under the same circumstances that they were. They were under a peremptory sentence of death within *forty years*, and none of them knew how much sooner they might be taken away: and this is not much different from our case; for we are liable to death at any time, every day, every moment; and how few of us in this congregation can reasonably either hope or expect to have our lives prolonged beyond the term of *forty years?* Nay, it is very probable, that not one of us in a hundred will hold out so long. And then this prayer may be as fit for us, as it was for Moses and the Israelites, that God would *teach us so to number our days*; that is, to make such an account of the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, and so to consider and lay to heart our latter end, *that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; that is, that we may manage and conduct this frail, and short, and uncertain life, in the best manner, and to the wisest purposes.

And this consideration of our latter end was always esteemed by the wisest men, a principal part and main point of wisdom. Socrates, who was by the general consent of wise men (a more infallible oracle than that of Apollo) esteemed the wisest of all the philosophers, gives us this definition of philosophy, that *it is the meditation or study of death*; to intimate to us, that this is true wisdom, to be much in the thought of our latter end, and in a constant readiness and preparation for it. And this a greater than Socrates had long before him observed to be a chief point of wisdom, I mean *Moses the man of God*, that divine person and Prince of the ancient Prophets, not only in this psalm, but also in his last divine song, a little before his death; in which he makes this the sum of all his wishes for the people of Israel, that God would endow them with this high point of wisdom, Deut. xxxii. 29. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* This is true wisdom and philosophy, *to consider our latter end.*

And this, by God's assistance, shall be the argument which I intend to handle from these words; namely, to shew what influence and effect the serious consideration of our latter end, and of the shortness and uncer-

tainty of this present life, ought in reason to have upon us. And of this I shall give you an account in these following particulars:

I. The meditation of our latter end should make us to take into consideration our whole lives, and our whole duration, that we may resolve and act accordingly. And this is a main point of wisdom, to understand ourselves, and the nature of our beings, of what we consist, and for what duration we are designed; whether we consist only of matter a little better fashioned and moulded, and made up into a more curious and complicated engine, consisting of many secret and hidden springs and wheels, and fitted for greater variety of motions, and for more fine and subtile operations, than the bodies of those other creatures which we esteem below us: Or whether we be endowed with a spiritual principle, wholly distinct from matter, and capable not only of sense, but of acts of reason, and of the impressions of religion, from the apprehensions of a deity and a superior being that is of itself, and made us and all other things. In a word, whether we shall *die like beasts*; or whether there be *an immortal spirit within us*, which hath no dependence upon matter and the bodily and visible part of ourselves, but is *a much better and enduring substance*, which hath no principle of corruption in itself, but shall survive these perishing bodies, and when they are mouldered into dust, shall subsist in a happy or miserable condition, according as we have behaved ourselves in this world.

For these are two very different hypotheses and schemes of things, and ought to affect us very differently, and to inspire us with different resolutions, and to put us upon a quite contrary method and conduct of our lives.

For on the one hand, if we be well assured, that we shall be utterly extinguished by death, *like the beasts that perish*, then we have nothing to take care of but our bodies, because we are nothing else; then we need not to extend our thoughts, our hopes, or fears beyond this world, and this present life; because we have nothing to do, but to please ourselves with present enjoyments, and to live so with other men, as may make most

moſt for our temporal quiet, and ſatisfaction, and ſecurity.

But then we are to conſider very well, whether theſe things be certainly ſo, and whether we may rely upon it, and whether it will bear all that weight which we lay upon it; whether theſe principles will not fail us, when we come moſt to ſtand in need of the comfort and ſupport of them, and when death is in view, and making up towards us, quite vaniſh and diſappear; becauſe it is of infinite conſequence to us, to be well aſſured of this, ſince our happineſs or miſery to all eternity depends upon it. And therefore nothing leſs than a demonſtration of the impoſſibility of the thing, of our having immortal ſpirits that ſhall ſurvive our bodies, and ſubſiſt apart from them, and be extremely miſerable or happy in another world; I ſay, nothing but a demonſtration of the impoſſibility of this, ought to be ſatisfaction to us in a caſe of ſo great danger, and upon which ſo much does depend.

For if there be a poſſibility on the other ſide, of our having immortal ſouls, which ſhall live for ever in another world, nothing can acquit us from the greateſt imprudence, if we ſhould neglect to take care of that better and more laſting part of ourſelves, and to provide for that duration which ſhall never have an end.

And therefore, if the ſuppoſition of the ſoul's immortality be infinitely more probable, as better agreeing with all the notions which men have of God and his providence, and with the natural deſires, and hopes, and fears of mankind, and as moſt ſuitable to all our capacities and expectations, and to the general opinion and conſent of wiſe men in all ages; then it is infinitely more ſafe, and conſequently more wiſe, to proceed upon this ſuppoſition, and to provide and act accordingly.

Thus, *to number our days*, that is, to make ſuch an account of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of this life, as to imploy it mainly in the care and preparation for a better life, will engage us effectually in the buſineſs of religion. And this, perhaps, is the meaning of this phraſe in the text, of *applying our hearts to wiſdom*, according to that of Job, Job xxviii. 28. *But unto man he:*

he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; as if he had said, this is the true wisdom, the great excellency and perfection of human nature is religion, the lively sense and firm belief of a deity, and a cariage and demeanour suitable to that belief; and that man is well taught, and rightly instructed in the great business and concernment of this life, and makes a wise reckoning and account of the shortness and uncertainty of it, who applies himself to the business of religion: for this is the fundamental principle of wisdom, by which our whole life, and all the actions of it ought to be governed and conducted.

So that if we have immortal spirits, which shall live and continue for ever, we cannot in reason but take our whole life, and our whole duration into consideration. And if we do so, we can never justify it to ourselves, to imploy all our care and time about the worst and more ignoble part of ourselves, and to make provision only for the few days of our pilgrimage here in this world, without any regard to that eternal duration, which we shall have in another world.

The serious consideration of this cannot fail to make us careful of our souls, and concerned for eternity; and in order to the securing the happiness of that state, to mind us to work out our salvation with great care and diligence; that if it be possible, we may avoid the misery, and obtain the happiness of another world; because there is no comparison between the goods and evils of this life, and those of the other, neither in respect of the degree, nor of the duration of them. And therefore it must needs be great wisdom, to forego the good things of this life, to obtain those of the other; and to bear the evils and afflictions of this life, to escape those of the other. For what man in his wits, for a temporal convenience and satisfaction, would forfeit an eternal benefit and advantage? and to escape a present evil, which cannot last long, would run himself upon one infinitely greater, and which will last for ever?

Consider then, *and shew yourselves men.* Can there be a greater oversight and miscarriage in the conduct of our affairs, than to mind that least which concerns us most? Is it possible for men to run into a greater mistake

ſtake than to think that their great buſineſs in this world, is to mind the things of this world? And yet the greateſt part of mankind not only run into this miſtake at their firſt ſetting out, but perſiſt in it all their days; as if their great, and indeed their only concernment were to pleaſe themſelves for the preſent, and to provide for this world, as if they were to live always in it: forgetting all this while, that they have immortal ſouls, which ſhall ſurvive their bodies, and after a time be re-united to them, to live for ever, deprived of that happineſs which they would take no care to ſecure, and undergoing that miſery and puniſhment which they would be at no pains to prevent whilſt they were in this world, and the opportunity of ſecuring the one, and avoiding the other, was in their hands.

II. The thoughts of our latter end ſhould make us very ſerious and compoſed in our ſpirits. For if we have immortal ſouls as well as dying bodies; if we ſhall live for ever, and if the happineſs of all eternity depends upon the improvement of this ſhort time of our lives, and our carriage and demeanour while we are here in this world; then it is no trifling buſineſs, it is not a matter of ſmall concernment to us how we live here, and manage ourſelves during our abode in this world.

Whom do not the lively thoughts of death, and the near approach of it make grave and ſerious, and many men, much wiſer and more conſiderate than ever they were in any other time of their lives, and much truer judges of things? They can then tell how they ought to have lived, what uſe they ſhould have made of their time, and what uſe they would make of it, if God would be pleaſed to prolong it to them.

The near view of another world is an amazing thing, and apt to inſpire men with better thoughts and reſolutions than ever they had before. And why ſhould not the clear proſpect of it at a diſtance, and the aſſured belief of it, have the ſame effect upon us, to make us ſerious, and to mind in good earneſt, *in this our day, the things which belong to our peace*, and *to wait all the days of our appointed time, till our change ſhall come?*

And

And therefore, to engage us to a continual seriousness and watchfulness, the great Judge of the world hath hid from us both the time of the general judgment, and of our particular summons out of this world, that we might never be unprovided for the main chance, for that which may happen at any time, and which will concern us for ever.

III. The meditation of our latter end should put us upon minding the great business of our lives with all our might, and make us very vigorous and industrious in it, I mean the business of religion, and the salvation of our souls. And if we set up this, as in reason we ought, for the great end and design of our lives, and the main scope of all our actions, it will make our lives of a piece, and every part thereof agreeable to itself: because our mind will stand continually bent one way, and all our thoughts, and cares, and endeavours, will be united in one great end and design.

And it will oblige us to great diligence and industry, and make us work hard, to think how great a work we have to do, and how little time to do it in, perhaps much less than most of us do imagine. It is not an easy work for a man to become good, and fit for heaven; it requires time, and care, and great watchfulness over ourselves, great struglings, and many a conflict with the evil inclinations of our minds, which after we have conquered them, will often rally and make head again; a stout resistance of temptations, a stiff and obstinate resolution not to yield to them, and a patient continuance in well-doing. The consideration whereof should make us very careful and diligent to get oil into our lamps; that is, all those graces and virtues, all those good dispositions which may fit us for another world, and prepare us for eternity; it should make us very vigorous and industrious to do all the good we can, while the opportunity of doing it is in our hands, and to make ourselves as good as we can, because this is the time and season of laying the foundation of our future happiness, and increasing the degrees of it; for *as we sow, so shall we reap; he that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that sows plentifully, shall reap plentifully.* Every degree of virtue and goodness

that

that we attain to, in this world, will meet with a ſuitable reward, and a more reſplendent degree of glory and happineſs in the next life.

And we ſhall have this advantage by a great induſtry and diligence in working out our own ſalvation, that if we have made religion the great care and buſineſs of our lives, we ſhall have nothing to do when we come to die, but to renew our repentance for the errors and miſcarriages of our lives, and to beg God's pardon and forgiveneſs of them, for the ſake of the meritorious obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour; to comfort ourſelves in the goodneſs and promiſes of God, and in the glorious hopes of the happineſs which we are ready to enter upon; and in the mean time to exerciſe faith and patience for a very little while, till death put an end to the ſorrows and miſeries of life.

IV. The meditation of our latter end ſhould make us much in the exerciſe of repentance, and to renew it frequently; becauſe we continually offend God, and provoke him every day, if not by ſins of commiſſion, yet of omiſſion and neglect in one kind or other, and by the imperfection of our beſt actions and ſervices; if not by preſumptuous ſins and againſt knowledge, yet by manifold ſins of ignorance and infirmity; ſo that the beſt of us may ſay with David every day, *who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret ſins. If thou ſhouldſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, O Lord, who can ſtand?*

Thus by exerciſing a daily, or at leaſt a very frequent repentance, we may keep our accounts in a good meaſure even, and not be in a hurry and confuſion when we come to die, neither knowing where to begin our repentance, nor how to go through with ſo great a work in ſo ſhort a time, and in circumſtances of ſo much weakneſs and diſtraction. There are hardly any of us, eſpecially of us who are miniſters, and have frequent occaſion to attend upon ſick-beds, but have ſeen ſeveral in theſe wretched circumſtances, not knowing what to do, deſirous to repent, but what through weakneſs of body, and horror and confuſion of mind, not knowing how to go about it, lamenting their neglect of it in the time of their health, and deſpairing of doing it

it now with any success and acceptance. These are sad spectacles indeed, and ought to be loud warnings to us who are in health, and have the opportunity of repentance before us, to make use of it, and to set about this necessary work out of hand, *to-day, whilst it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,* and be at last brought into those miserable straits which I have been describing, and which no man that understands himself would be in for all the world.

V. The meditation of the shortness and uncertainty of life should make us great husbands of our time, as that which next to our immortal souls, and for the sake of them, is the most precious and valuable thing in the world. For as on the one hand, nothing will comfort us more when we come to die and leave this world, than the remembrance of a well-spent life, carefully employed in the service of God, and for the benefit and advantage of men; so, on the other hand, there is nothing for which our consciences will more bitterly reproach us at that time, and fly in our faces with greater fury and rage, than for an useless and unprofitable, especially if it have been likewise (as is too commonly seen) a wicked and vicious life.

Our life is uncertain, and therefore we should seize the present time, and improve it to the best advantage, though it be but short in itself, and very short in respect of the great and long work which we have to do in it. To prevent or cure the manifold distempers of our minds, and to preserve our souls in a good state of health, and to keep them free from the disorders of our appetites and passions, requires a wise conduct, and a very careful management of ourselves. Evil and inveterate habits are not mastered and mortified in an instant; nor the contrary virtues attained in any measure of perfection, but by long practice, and slow degrees. There must be time, and patience, and perseverance, for the doing of these things, and we must *give all diligence to add to our faith knowledge, and to our knowledge virtue,* and one virtue to another, and one degree of virtue to another; and nothing without this can minister true comfort to us in the hour of death, and make

make us to *lift up our heads with joy in the day of judgement.*

The conſideration of this ſhould make us careful not to neglect any occaſion of doing good, or of making ourſelves better; and reſtrain us from allowing too much of our time to thoſe great waſters and devourers of it, diverſions and viſits: becauſe they do not only hinder us from better work and employment, but are apt inſenſibly to work us off from that ſerious temper of mind, which becomes thoſe who do in good earneſt deſign for another world.

VI. The meditation of our latter end ſhould make us always to prefer the doing of our duty, and the keeping of a good conſcience, to all temporal conſiderations whatſoever, whether of fame and the good opinion of men, or of wealth and riches, of honour and dignity, of authority and power, *chuſing rather, with Moſes, to ſuffer afflictions with the people of God, than to have the temporary enjoyments of ſin.*

And as for pleaſure, there is little in this world that is true and ſincere, beſides the pleaſure of doing our duty, and of doing good; I am ſure none that is comparable to it. A good conſcience is *a continual feaſt;* and he certainly pleaſeth himſelf beſt, and is moſt eaſy in his own mind who is conſcious to himſelf that he endeavours as well as he can to do what he ought.

VII. The meditation of our mortality ſhould teach us the true price and value of all temporal enjoyments, and make us duly affected towards them, and to ſit as looſe to them in our affections as we can; for nothing ſurely can be more apt to beget in us a coldneſs and indifference towards the enjoyments of this world, than the conſideration of the uncertainty of all theſe things, and of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of our own lives.

Or if we ſuppoſe, that they and we both ſhould continue for ſome number of years, yet there will be an end of them or us; and nothing is to be reckoned a laſting happineſs, that will have an end, though it ſhould be long firſt: for where there can be either ſorrow or an end of our joy, there can be no true felicity.

Beſides,

Besides, that the nature of the things of this world is such, that they afford but little happiness to us whilst we have them; we cannot do well without them, and yet we can hardly do well with them. Most of the enjoyments of this world, as desirable as they are to us, are very dangerous, and are always attended with some inconvenience or other; and even when we have all that we can wish for in this world, we are apt to be still uneasy, either something troubles us, or nothing pleases us; we are pained with fulness, and cloyed with the long enjoyment of the best things this world can give us. Why then should we set such an high and unreasonable value upon these temporary enjoyments, and be so much concerned for those things of which we have so slippery a hold, and so slender an assurance, and which afford us so very little contentment and satisfaction when we have them, and yet give us so much grief and trouble when we lose them? Considering how soon we must, and how suddenly we may, leave this world, and all the enjoyments of it, we ought in reason to set no great price upon them.

VIII. The consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of our lives should make us contented with our present condition, and patient under all the evils and afflictions which may befal us in this world. A little may content us for a little while, for the short time of our abode here; and since we do not expect our rest and happiness in this world, we cannot think ourselves disappointed, if we do not meet with it. If our condition be tolerable, it is well, and we have reason to be contented with it, since it is as much as this world usually affords. If it be very mean and strait, it cannot last long; and even that consideration should silence our murmurings and should restrain and check our discontent.

And it should make us patient likewise under the greatest evils and afflictions of this present life, to consider that they will shortly have an end; either they will give off of themselves, or they will carry us off and make an end of us, and all the patience we have exercised will be rewarded far beyond the proportion of our sufferings.

At

At the worſt, the afflictions and ſufferings of this preſent time are not like the troubles and miſeries of the other world, they will not laſt always. The moſt grievous things that can befal us here, are not like the torments of hell, neither for the degree, nor the duration of them, without intermiſſion and without end.

IX. The meditation of death, and of the conſequences of it, ſhould make us upright and ſincere in all our words and actions. Hypocriſy and diſſimulation, as much as they are practiſed, are no part of true wiſdom, no, not as to this world; they recoil terribly upon men, and turn to their reproach and diſadvantage ſo ſoon as they are diſcerned, and they cannot be long practiſed without being diſcovered. But if we regard the other world, all diſguiſes and arts of deceit are perfect folly; becauſe then God *will bring every work into judgment, and every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,* as Solomon aſſures us, Eccleſ. xii. 14. And our bleſſed Saviour cautions us againſt hypocriſy, upon this conſideration, that there is a day coming, when all the falſe pretences of men ſhall be expoſed and laid open, and all thoſe maſks and vizors which men wear in this world will fall off, and the actions of men ſhall appear in their true colours, Luke xii. 1. 2. *Beware,* ſays our Saviour there firſt of all, *of the leaven of the Phariſee, which is hypocriſy; for there is nothing covered, that ſhall not be revealed; nor hid, that ſhall not be known.*

Laſtly, The meditation of our latter end ſhould put us upon a careful, and continual, and particular preparation for the time of our death and diſſolution. And this is very well worth our while; and the ſooner we ſet about it, the better: becauſe, when this work is in any good meaſure done, we have reſcued ourſelves from that bondage, to which moſt men are all their life long ſubject, becauſe of the continual *fear of death.* Nothing abates the terror of death, like a due preparation for it. When this is once made, we cannot be much concerned when it comes; for to a well-prepared mind, ſooner or later makes no great difference: but if we have delayed this neceſſary work, the longer we have delayed it, the more unfit we ſhall be for it, and

the more unwilling to set about it; and if necessity drives us to it at last, we shall find that old age and sickness are but bad times to make preparation for death in, to begin our repentance and the change of a bad life. He that prepares not for death, before he draws near to it, and comes to lie upon a sick-bed, is like him that begins to study the art of navigation, when he hath present occasion and use for the skill which he hath not yet learned, when his vessel is driven among rocks, and is every moment in danger of being dashed in pieces.

Let this then be established for a firm principle and rule, that the best and surest preparation for a happy and comfortable death, is a holy and good life. For nothing will disarm death of its terrors, like the conscience of our own innocency, and of a sincere desire and endeavour to please God in the general course and tenour of our lives, and of a sincere repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of our lives. And though our life be short and uncertain, yet it is a great deal that we may do by way of preparation for another world, if we begin and set out betimes, and be good husbands of the present opportunities. It is a great way that we may go in a short time, if we be always moving and pressing forwards.

But the mischief is, many men pass fifty or sixty years in the world, and when they are just going out of it, they bethink themselves, and step back, as it were, to do something which they had all this while forgot, *viz.* the main business for which they came into the world, to repent of their sins and reform their lives, and make their peace with God, and in time to prepare for eternity. This, which is forgotten and deferred to the last, ought to have been first thought of, and to have been made the great business of their whole lives.

But I proceed to give some more particular directions concerning our preparation for death; namely,

1. By frequent meditation of it, which will render it more familiar to us and help us to tame this monster, and to take off the dread of it; and therefore we should accustom ourselves to the thoughts of it, that we may in some measure be reconciled to it.

2. We should endeavour to mitigate the evil and terror

terror of death, by thinking of ſomething worſe, I mean the evils and miſeries of life. For when we once come to look upon death as a remedy of all the evils of life, we ſhall then begin to be reconciled to it; and if we be wiſe, ſhall be glad to be out of the noiſe, and danger, and ſuffering of ſo many evils as we are continually liable to in this world; and ſhall thank God heartily for diſmiſſing us, and giving us leave to die, and by death to put an end to this miſerable life, and to begin a better and happier life, which ſhall never have an end.

And we ſhould likewiſe meditate much on the glory and happineſs of another world. For if we be once poſſeſſed with a firm belief and perſuaſion of it, we ſhall think the time long that we are detained from it, and wiſh for that which we ſo much feared, I mean death, that it may bring us to the enjoyment of that which we have much more reaſon to deſire.

And indeed, conſidering (as I ſaid before) the many evils and miſeries which we are liable to and always in danger of, while we are in this world, we have cauſe to thank God that we were born to die, and that we are not condemned to live for ever in this world. So that whenever God ſhall think fit to releaſe us, we ought to eſteem it a favour: but if he will have us to ſtay a little longer, we muſt with patience wait for another opportunity of making our eſcape out of an evil and troubleſome world. But, methinks, we ſhould not much deſire to ride it out in the ſtorm any longer, when the port is open, and we may ſafely enter in. And then,

3. By way of farther preparation for death, we ſhould endeavour to maintain always a lively ſenſe of it in our minds, that we may be, to all good effects and purpoſes as much under the power of it, as if it were juſt approaching, as if the phyſician or the judge had paſſed the ſentence of death upon us. We ſhould always reckon upon that which may happen the next moment; and if we do ſo, we can never be extremely ſurprized; but *whenever our Lord comes, ſhall be found watching.* And,

Laſtly, We ſhould make it our conſtant prayer to God, that he would fit us for our diſſolution, and ſtand

by us and comfort us in that needful time, without whose gracious support and assistance, both physicians and even the ministers of God themselves, are but *miserable comforters.* It should be our daily petition to God, that he would enable us to perform this last act of our life with decency and constancy of mind, that neither our disease nor our weakness may break the firmness of our spirits, or leave us to be amazed with fear, or betrayed with peevishness, so as to render us uneasy to ourselves, or to make our friends willing to be rid of us.

But more especially, when God thinks fit, either by the nature or present danger of our distemper, to give us a nearer summons and clearer warning of our mortality, we should take the opportunity to impress upon our minds a deep and more lively sense of another world, that we may quicken our pace, and *work the work of him that sent us into the world, while it is day; because the night is coming when no man can work.*

Nature, I know, is fond of life, and apt to be still longing after a longer continuance here, and to find many delays and excuses to tarry yet a while longer in this world: and yet a very long life, with the usual burdens and infirmities of it, is seldom in reason desirable: for it is but the same thing over again, or worse; so many more days and nights, summers and winters, a repetition of the same pleasures, but still with less pleasure and relish; a return of the same or greater pains and troubles, but still with less patience and strength to bear them.

Let us then be of good courage in the approaches of death, since we see land, and the storm which we are in will quickly be over; and then it will be as if it had never been, or rather the remembrance of it will be a great pleasure to us.

Suave mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis,
E terrâ alterius magnum spectare periclum.
Non quia vexari quendam est jucunda voluptas;
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.

"It is a pleasant thing to stand upon the shore, when "we see others in a great storm at sea. Not that it is "delightful

" delightful to see others in danger; but when others " are in great difficulties and dangers, it is a pleasure to " find ourselves safe and out of danger."

And if it should please God to exercise us with great pains or tedious sickness, we should make use of all the considerations, which reason and religion do furnish us withal, to help to mitigate and deceive our troubles, and to make that short way a little more smooth and easy. For the best of us have no privilege and exemption from the common accidents of humanity, no piety can certainly secure to any of us an easy and comfortable death; and therefore it is a groundless confidence for any man to reckon upon it; we must in this, as in all other things, resign up ourselves to God's good pleasure, and submit to him the time and manner, and all other circumstances of our departure out of this world; whether our sun shall set in a cloud, or shine brightest and look biggest when it is going down. But however it sets, it is the sun still, and the fountain of light, and will rise gloriously. There are always the seeds of joy and comfort in the conscience of a good man; and though they be hid and buried for a while, they will spring forth one time or other. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*, as David assures us, Psal. xcvii. 11. I will conclude all with the words of the author of this Psalm, Deut. xxxii. 29. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*

SERMON CLXXXIX.

The life of Jesus Christ considered, as our example.

1 PET. ii. 21.

——Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.

The first sermon on this text.

THE Apostle here propounds to Christians the example of our Saviour, as an argument to persuade them to one particular grace and virtue, namely, patience under sufferings unjustly laid upon us, ver. 19. 20. 21. *For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

But though the example of our Saviour be here propounded to us upon a particular occasion, and with a more especial regard to the particular virtue of patience under unjust sufferings, which did so eminently appear in our blessed Saviour, the most meek and patient endurer that ever was, of the greatest and most wrongful sufferings; yet the Apostle does not limit this great pattern of all righteousness to the single virtue of patience, but propounds it to us, as an example of universal holiness and goodness; for so he extends it in the next words, *leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

In this latitude and extent I shall discourse of it at this time, and that under these following heads;

I. That

I. That his life is a most absolute and perfect pattern.

II. That it a very easy and familiar example.

III. Very encouraging to the imitation of it.

IV. An universal pattern fitted for the imitation of all sorts of persons, of what rank or condition soever.

V. In the nature of it, very powerful to engage and oblige men to the imitation of it.

I. The life of our blessed Saviour is a most absolute and perfect pattern of holiness and goodness, compleat and entire in all its parts, and perfect to the utmost degree, in the following whereof there is no danger of being misguided, no fear of miscarriage: whereas all other examples of mortal men are fallible and uncertain guides, which if we follow too closely, will some time or other mis-lead us. In the lives of the best men recorded in scripture, we may discern some spot and blemish, some error and oversight, some fall or slip; so that the lives of the holiest men are no sure rule, no perfect measure of our duty, and are therefore to be imitated with great wisdom and wariness, lest if we follow all their actions indifferently and implicitly, in confidence they are good because they are theirs, we may fall into great errors and failings; and therefore in following the lives and examples of the best men, we must have an eye to the rule, and by that judge of the example which we propose to imitate; otherwise we may easily be seduced by the authority of a great example.

But the example of our Lord is *a living law and rule*, his precepts and his pattern are of equal perfection, and the imitation of his life and actions is the very same thing with obedience to his laws. For the life of our blessed Saviour here on earth, is the life of God in the nature and likeness of man; he was God as well as man, and the divine nature is certainly the pattern of all perfection. As he was the Son of God, he was *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image and character of his person*; and as he was the Son of Man, though he had natural frailties and infirmities, and was subject to hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, like other men; yet he had all the moral perfections belonging to human nature, without any of the evil inclinations,

nations, and sinful frailties to which it is incident; and his human nature was assisted in an extraordinary manner by the Spirit of God, which *was not communicated to him by measure, but he was anointed with that holy unction above his fellows,* above all the sons of men, above all the Prophets and messengers of God that ever were sent to mankind; *he had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* And indeed it was requisite, that he that *was manifested to take away our sins,* and to make expiation for them, should himself be *without sin,* as the Apostle to the Hebrews reasons, Heb. vii. 26. *Such an high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:* and had he not been so, he could neither have been an example, nor an expiation.

And this is no small advantage to mankind, to have so excellent a pattern of the same nature with ourselves to imitate, so perfect a copy to write after. For whoever would excel in any kind, must (as Quintilian says) *optima quæque exempla ad imitandum proponere,* "propose to himself the highest and most perfect examples of that kind for his imitation;" and the example of our blessed Saviour is unquestionably such a perfect pattern of all goodness and virtue, to the perfection whereof though we can never attain, yet it is a great advantage to have it always before us, and in our eye, that we may correct the errors and deformities of our lives, by the unspotted purity and perfect innocency of his life, and that we may be always aspiring after farther degrees of goodness; for surely we can no way better learn how God would have men to live in this world, than by seeing how God himself lived, when he was pleased to become man, to assume our nature, and dwell among us.

II. As the life of our blessed Saviour is a most perfect, so likewise it is a familiar and easy example. The divine nature is the great pattern of perfection; but that is too remote from us, and above our sight; *no man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him;* and though his perfections are represented to our minds in some degree, yet they are so glorious and dazzling an object, that we cannot bear to behold them with that stedfastness,

nefs, with which we ought to eye our pattern; and therefore God hath been pleafed to condefcend fo far to our weaknefs, as to give us a vifible example of thofe virtues he requires of us, in *his own Son, appearing in the likenefs of finful flefh*; and the Son of God is an example of equal perfection with God himfelf, but much more eafy and familiar, and level to us, in which we may fee the feveral virtues of a good life practifed in fuch inftances, and upon fuch occafions, as do frequently happen in human life.

Nothing ever was more fimple and open, more obvious and eafy to common imitation, than the life of our bleffed Saviour, in which there was nothing dark and myfterious, abftrufe and intricate; it was all perfect innocency and goodnefs, and he carried on one plain, and intelligible, and uniform defign, which was to do all the good he poffibly could to all men: this he purfued with all his might, with the greateft vigour and induftry, with an undaunted courage and refolution, with an unwearied diligence, with a conftant chearfulnefs and ferenity of mind; this was *his meat and drink*, his great bufinefs and delight, his life and his happinefs; he was not fupercilioufly morofe, had no affected fingularities, no peculiar auflerities in habit or diet, different from the common ufage of men; his converfation was kind and innocent, free and familiar, open and indifferent to all forts of perfons; for he was a phyfician, and every body had need of him, all mankind were his patients. He did not place religion (as fome have done fince) in retirement from the world, and fhunning the converfation of men, and taking great care to do no body good; not in profound myfteries and fine fpeculations, but in the plain and honeft practice of the folid and fubftantial virtues of a good life; in meeknefs and humility, in kindnefs and charity, in contentednefs in a low and mean condition, and a calm compofure of mind under all accidents and events, in patience under the greateft reproaches and fufferings, and a perfect fubmiffion to the will of God in all his difpenfations, how harfh and unpleafant foever.

Now there is nothing in all this, but what lies open

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to every man's understanding, and is easy to our practice and imitation, requiring nothing but an honest mind, and due care and diligence to do what we may easily know, to follow our guide in a plain way, and in all the actions of our lives, to tread in those steps in which the Son of God, and the best man that ever was, hath gone before us.

III. The life of our blessed Saviour is likewise an encouraging example. It cannot but give great life to all good resolutions and endeavours, to see all that which God requires of us performed by one in our nature, by a man like ourselves. Our Saviour indeed had many advantages above us, being God as well as man; and his humanity, being supported by the divine nature to which it was united, being clear from all the ill effects of original sin, and from all kind of vicious and inordinate inclination: but then, it is a great encouragement to us, to consider that God doth not require at our hands a perfect and unsinning obedience, as the condition of our salvation and happiness; but only such an obedience to his laws, as is sincere and continually aspiring after greater perfection, which is very possible to us by the grace of Christ, even in this imperfect state; that God considers our weakness, and how much we stand in need of his grace and assistance, and hath assured us that it shall not be wanting to us, if we heartily and earnestly beg it of him; and that strength which we may have for asking, is as good as if it were our own. If Christ were the Son of God, so are we in a lower degree by grace and adoption; *and if we be the sons of God, the spirit of God dwells in us,* to quicken and to raise us to newness of life. And he that hath left us such an example, on purpose that we might follow it, will not surely leave us destitute of power to enable us to do so. It is a good argument to us, that he will enable us to do that in some degree in our own persons, which he himself did for our example in our nature.

An example more suitable to our weakness might seem to have had more encouragement in it: but we are to consider, that the Son of God assumed our nature, as compassed with infirmities, and liable to *be tempted*

tempted in all things as we are, only without ſin; ſo that his example could not poſſibly have come nearer to us than it does, without great diſadvantage to us, without wanting that perfection which is neceſſary to a compleat and abſolute pattern. In ſhort, the ſpirit of Chriſt dwells in us; and the ſame ſpirit, which kept and preſerved him from all ſin, is equally able to mortify ſin in us, and to enable us to do the will of God in ſuch manner as he will accept to our juſtification.

IV. It is an univerſal pattern. As the doctrine of our Saviour, ſo his example was of an univerſal nature and deſign, calculated for all times, and places, and, as much as was poſſible, abſtracted from the circumſtances of a particular condition, that it might be the more equally ſuited to all callings, and conditions, and capacities of men, and fitted for general direction and imitation in all ſorts of goodneſs and virtue, either in the general principle, or in the particular inſtances of them. And for this reaſon he would not engage himſelf in any particular calling, or way of life, that his pattern might more equally and indifferently regard all mankind.

He was really a great perſon, the greateſt that ever was in birth and dignity, being the only Son of God, the maker and heir of all things: and yet he ſubmitted to the loweſt condition, to all the degrees of poverty and meanneſs of contempt and ſufferings, to teach men of high degree to be humble and ſerviceable to the good of others; and men of low degree to be contented and chearful in the meaneſt condition, and the hardeſt circumſtances that the providence of God ſhall ſee good to place them in.

He had the deepeſt and moſt comprehenſive knowledge; *in him*, as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, *were hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge:* and yet he made no vain ſhow and oſtentation of it; he did not puzzle his hearers with abſtruſe ſpeculations and ſublime myſteries, but in a way of plain and familiar inſtruction, declared to his hearers thoſe things which were moſt uſeful and neceſſary for them to know. He confuted the doctors, and confounded the wiſdom of the wiſe, thoſe who were conceited of their own knowledge and ſkill in

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divine things; but was always ready to condescend to the weakness and ignorance of the the meanest capacity; giving herein an example to the wise and learned, not to make a show of their knowledge, but to make the best use of it; not to lift up themselves above others, but to condescend and stoop to them for their good.

He sometimes retired from conversation and company, that he might be alone and at leisure to attend upon God, and meditate on divine and heavnely things, without interruption and distraction; but most frequently he conversed with others, and mingled himself with all sorts of persons, that he might give all the advantage, and do all the good he could to all men. Nay, he did not decline the conversation of the worst of men, and it was really true which was objected to him, that *he was a friend of publicans and sinners,* being sincerely desirous to do them the greatest kindness in the world, to reform their manners, and reclaim them to a better course; so that he was a pattern both of the contemplative and active life, and shews us how to mix these to the greatest advantage; and by his own example teacheth us, that we cannot serve God better than by doing good to men; and that he is as well pleased, when we lay out ourselves for the benefit of others spiritual and temporal, as if we employed all our thoughts and meditations wholly upon himself and divine things; that a perpetual retirement from the world, and shunning the conversation of men, is not the most religious life, but living among men, and doing good to them.

More particularly, the life of our blessed Saviour is a pattern to us,

1. Of the greatest and most substantial virtues.
2. Of the most rare and unusual.
3. Of the most useful and beneficial.
4. Of the most hard and difficult: and,
5. Of such virtues as are most needful; and for the practice of which, there is the greatest and most frequent occasion in human life.

1. It is a pattern of the greatest and most substantial virtues.

Of

Of a fervent piety and devotion toward God. We read, that he often retired to pray, and ſometimes ſpent whole nights in it: his mind was continually upon God, as appears by his frequent ejaculations upon all occaſions, by his communication and diſcourſe, which was always either inſtructive of men in divine truths, or perſuaſive to a holy practice; from worldly objects and occurrences, he would take occaſion to raiſe ſome ſpiritual meditation, and to ſpeak of heavenly things.

And then his ready and chearful obedience to the will of God in all things: *in the volume of the book it is written of me, I am come to do thy will, O my God.* He ſpeaks of it with pleaſure; and *he delighted to do it*; he declined the will of God in no inſtance, how difficult and diſpleaſing ſoever to fleſh and blood.

The perfect purity and innocency of his life: *he was a Lamb without ſpot and blemiſh,* 1 Pet. i. 19. *He did no ſin.* Chap. ii. 21. *Leaving us herein an example,* that though we cannot keep equal pace with him, yet *we ſhould follow his ſteps. He was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners,* Heb. vii. 27.

And then his univerſal charity, taking all opportunities to do all the good, temporal and ſpiritual, that he could to all men, of which his whole life is one great and continued inſtance: theſe are all great and ſubſtantial virtues.

I have indeed ſaid nothing of juſtice, both becauſe there was little occaſion for it, he having nothing to do in thoſe matters wherein juſtice is concerned. He had no eſtate of his own, and he meddled not with thoſe of other mens: and likewiſe becauſe his life was all goodneſs, which is a virtue of a higher pitch than juſtice: he that was ſo good to all, we need not doubt of his juſtice, if there had been occaſion for it.

2. He was a pattern of the moſt rare and unuſual virtues.

Such was his ſincerity; *guile was not found in his mouth,* 1 Pet. ii. 22. His converſation was free and open, without diſguiſe and concealment; and therefore when the High-prieſt asked him of his diſciples, and of his doctrine, John xviii. 19. he wondered at the queſtion: *Why askeſt thou me? Ask them that heard me.*

I speak openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. And this is no common virtue, and therefore our Saviour gave it as a singular commendation to Nathaniel, John i. 47. *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* Perfect sincerity is a great foundation of goodness; it is soundness at the heart, and, like perfect health, seldom to be seen; there is hardly any thing wherein men, otherwise good and virtuous, do oftner trip and falter.

Another virtue which is not very usual, was eminent in our Saviour, I mean true humility, without affectation and secret pride lurking under it. This appeared very remarkable, and very natural in his whole life, which was all of it the greatest instance of humility that ever was; and therefore with great assurance he propounds himself to our imitation in this, Matth. xi. 29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in spirit.* And St. Paul sets this virtue before us, as being the constant temper of our Lord, and visible in his whole undertaking, and in every part of it from first to last, from his coming into the world, to his going out of it, Phil. ii. 5. 6. 7. 8. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation,* (he emptied himself of all his majesty and glory) *and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Here was humility indeed, from so great a height to stoop so low, from the top of glory and majesty, to the lowest pitch of meanness and misery. Here is a pattern for us; and how should it shame and confound the pride of the sons of men, to see the Son of God so humble? There is no virtue, I am sure, which we have so much reason, and yet none which we have so little inclination, to imitate. *Pride was not made for men,* says the son of Syrach: it does not become us, and yet it is the fashion; we know that we have no cause to be proud, and yet we know not how to be humble. Let the example of our Lord's humility bring down the haughtiness

neſs of men, and when we conſider how he abaſed himſelf, let us be *vile in our own eyes, and abhor ourſelves in duſt and aſhes.*

And then his contempt of the world, and the enjoyments and pleaſures of it, to that degree, that he would have no part and ſhare in the poſſeſſions of it, not ſo much as one of the firſt and almoſt loweſt conveniences of life, a ſettled abode and habitation, ſo that, as he himſelf tells us, he was in a more deſtitute condition than the brute creatures: *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have neſts; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.* Not that he deſigned to oblige us to a ſtrict imitation of him in this particular; for he might, and we may lawfully poſſeſs and enjoy theſe thing: but to teach us not to over-prize them, not to ſeek them too earneſtly, nor love them inordinately. That he deſpiſed them, ſhould keep us from admiring them, and doating upon them; that he would not have them in his poſſeſſion, ſhould keep them out of our hearts, and make us very looſe and indifferent in our affections to them; that he valued doing good above all the enjoyments of this world, ſhould make us value them only in order to that end.

And then his exceſſive kindneſs and benignity to us, ſuch as men very rarely ſhew to their beſt friends, and the beſt men; but ſuch as no man ever ſhewed to his enemies: *Peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die*, ſays St. Paul, Rom. v. 7. *But herein God commended his love to us, in that whilſt we were ſinners, Chriſt died for us.* And this pattern of love our Saviour propounds to our imitation, John xv. 12. 13. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend.* The higheſt pitch of human friendſhip that ever was, was *to die for a friend*; but our Lord died not for his friends, but for his enemies, that he might make them his friends, by gaining them to the obedience of his laws: *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you.* The ſame pattern the Apoſtles of our Lord propound to us, Eph. v. 2. *Walk in love, as Chriſt alſo hath loved us, and given himſelf for us.* 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the*

love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Here is a pattern of the highest and most unusual kind of love proposed to our imitation; not that every man, by virtue of this example, is to lay down his life for another, because that it is not practicable; for then by the same reason that I am obliged to lay down my life for another, he would be as much obliged to lay down his life for me; and so by my dying for him, I should hinder him of doing a duty to which he was equally obliged, and take it out of his hands: but the meaning of this precept is, that as Christ died for a common good, so we ought to bear that common affection to mankind, and especially to our brethren, who are endeared to us by a nearer relation, as in imitation of the example he hath given us, to be ready by our single life, if there be occasion, to redeem the lives of many of our brethren, and to expose ourselves to save them. This, I conceive, is all that can reasonably be collected from our obligation to imitate our Lord's example.

3. The life of our blessed Saviour is likewise a pattern of such virtues, as are most useful and beneficial to others.

In his readiness to do good to all persons in all kinds; by instructing their ignorance, and supplying their wants, spiritual and temporal; by resolving their doubts, and comforting them in their sorrows; by healing their diseases and infirmities, which he indeed did in extraordinary and miraculous ways, because he was destitute of ordinary means; and we are to do it by ordinary means, and such as are in our power, which when they are, there is no need of miracles. And then in his seeking occasions and opportunities for it, not content with those that offered themselves, but enquiring after them; and in his unwearied diligence in this work; for he went about doing good, spent whole days from morning to night, for the service and benefit of others; neglected himself, and the ordinary refreshments of nature, out of his great zeal *to work the work of him that sent him*, to bring glory to God, and good to men.

And in the delight he took in this employment; it was

was his meat and drink to be doing of it; he esteemed it his happiness, yea, a greater felicity to confer benefits upon others, than any man finds in receiving the greatest benefit from others: For that, it seems, was a noted saying of his, a kind of motto with him, as St. Paul testifies, Acts xx. 35. *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* And in all this, he persisted in despite of the greatest discouragements from the ingratitude and malice of men, who maligned him for his kindness, and put an ill construction upon his most charitable actions, and were ready to stone him for his good works; but this did not discourage him, and take him off; so he might do good, he was contented to bear and suffer ill.

And then in his condescension to others, and consideration of their weakness, and complying with them in lawful and indifferent things, for their edification, and to gain them in greater matters; this, St. Paul tells us, was our Lord's temper, and he urgeth Christians with the example of it, Rom. xv. 1. 2. 3. *We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself.* Where we have liberty and can yield, we ought to abate of our own humour, for the good and edification of others; and not peevishly and stiffly to insist upon lesser things, to the hindrance of a greater good; *for even Christ pleased not himself.* He who had all authority to command, and right to be obeyed, and who could not err in any thing; yet he condescended to the weakness and infirmities of others, and in all indifferent things, did not consult his own inclination, but their interest and edification.

And, which greatly conduceth to the comfort and benefit of all societies, both civil and ecclesiastical, he gave us the example of an obedient and peaceable temper, conforming himself and his actions not only to divine, but human laws, *Giving to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's;* insomuch that when tribute was demanded of him, though he was really free from any such obligation, and so poor that he was not able to pay it, in which case even

Cæsar must lose his right; nevertheless, to avoid offence, he submitted to it, and chose rather to work a miracle, than to appear refractory and disobedient.

And in religious rites and ceremonies, and the observance of days and times, he did not only conform to all divine institutions, but to human appointment and usage in all things that were of an innocent and indifferent nature; and this without any anxious scrupulosity, and perverse disputing every inch of his liberty; with great peaceableness observing those religious festivals, which had no other appointment but of the civil authority, and were of mere human institution: and with great prudence steering a middle course between endless superstition, and scrupulous and petulant faction; giving all Christians herein a pattern, how to demean themselves in like cases with great peaceableness and obedience, and not to do or avoid the doing of any thing, out of peevishness and singularity of humour, and a spirit of contradiction, and not to indulge needless and endless scruples, especially on the wrong side, as it is too visible many mens scruples lie almost wholly about obedience to authority, and compliance with indifferent customs, but very seldom about the danger of disobedience and unpeaceableness, and rending in pieces the church of Christ by needless separations, and endless divisions.

And our Lord did not only give us the example of a peaceable and uniting spirit, but a little before his departure out of the world, he bequeaths it to his disciples, as his last legacy, John xiv. 27. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* And to confirm it to them, he makes it his most earnest and particular prayer to God for them, that God would preserve this spirit of peace and unity among Christians to the end of the world, foreseeing in his infinite wisdom, what mischiefs and dishonour the contrary temper would bring to his holy religion, John xvii. 20. 21. 22. 23. *Neither pray I for these alone,* meaning his disciples, *but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;* that is, for all Christians to the end of the world; *that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe*

believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me. Intimating, that nothing is more apt to bring in question the divinity of the Christian doctrine, than contentions and divisions among Christians, *that the world may know thou hast sent me.*

Let us often think of this pattern, and this prayer of our Saviour, and let the consideration of it quell those unchristian heats which are among us, lest by our animosities and divisions about lesser things, which, whatever opinion men may have of them, do no ways touch upon the life and essence of religion, we first dishonour, and finally destroy from among us, the best religion in the world. *And God grant that we may all know, and do, in this our day, the things which belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes, for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and ever.*

SERMON CXC.

The life of Jesus Christ considered, as our example.

1 Pet. ii. 21.

——*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

The second sermon on this text.

I Have considered our Saviour's example as an universal pattern, calculated for all persons, times and places; and this I illustrated in these particulars:

1. That it was a pattern to us of the greatest and most substantial virtues.

2. Of such as are most rare and unusual.

3. Of

3. Of such as are most usual and beneficial to others: I proceed to the particulars, which remain to be spoken to.

4. Our Saviour is likewise a pattern to us of such virtues as are most hard and difficult to be practised, such as are most against the grain of our corrupt nature, and most contrary to flesh and blood.

Every virtue is then hard and difficult, when it either contradicts the strong inclinations of nature, or meets with powerful temptations to the contrary.

The virtues which thwart the inclinations of human nature are comprehended under the general name of self-denial; the denial of ourselves in those things which are commonly dearest to men; such are our own life, our pleasure or ease, our reputation; in all these, our blessed Lord hath given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was; he denied his own life, and gave up himself wholly to the will of God, to do and suffer whatever he thought fit to impose upon him. So he himself tells us, John v. 30. *I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me:* And John vi. 30. *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* And when he was in that great agony, upon the apprehension of his approaching sufferings, at which nature did start, and when that *bitter cup, that cup of astonishment,* was put into his hand, though he would have been glad to have declined it, if God had thought fit; yet upon the whole matter, he submitted to it, and renounced his own will, the strongest inclination of nature that could be, in obedience to the will of God. Matth. xxvi. 39. *He fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt:* And ver. 42. *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.* Here was a great conflict; nature declined those dreadful sufferings which were coming upon him, and would have shrunk back: but he considered his duty, and made his inclination to yield to it.

And he did not only deny his own will in obedience to the will of God, for which there is so great and invincible

vincible reason; but he denied it likewise in compliance and condescension to the prejudices, and humours, and infirmities of men, for their edification and good. So St. Paul tells us, and propounds our Lord herein to us for a pattern, Rom. xv. 2. 3.

He denied himself in the lawful pleasures and satisfactions, in the ease and accomodations of life: he lived meanly, and fared hardly: he possessed and enjoyed none of the good things of this world, and endured all the evils of it; he despised riches, and the pomp, and pride of life, and contented himself with a poor and destitute condition, *having not where to lay his head*, nor wherewithal to support nature, and to defray the common tribute without a miracle. And he did not submit to this poor and mean condition upon necessity, for *he was lord of all*; he made the world, and it was all his own, upon the highest right and title: but he voluntarily embraced it; *being rich, for our sake he became poor*, that he might wean us from the love of these things, and be an effectual example to us of the contempt of worldly wealth and greatness.

And he denied himself likewise in one of the dearest and tenderest things in the world, to the wisest and greatest minds, I mean in point of reputation: *he made himself of no reputation*, says St. Paul. Phil. ii. 7. ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε *he emptied himself*. To submit to contempt, is to empty one's self indeed: reputation being one of the last things a generous mind would be content to forego, and that which some have held in equal dearness and esteem with life itself; yet in this our Lord denied himself, and that he might do good to mankind, was contented to be esteemed one of the worst men; and without any kind of cause and desert, to undergo all manner of obloquy and reproach, to be accounted a magician and impostor, *a friend and companion of publicans and sinners*; a seducer of people, a seditious person, and more worthy of the most cruel and shameful death than the greatest malefactor. Thus was the Son of God contented to be set below the worst of men, to be abased and vilified, that he might be a perfect pattern to us of this difficult virtue of self-denial,

even

even in those things which are held in the greatest esteem among the best of men.

And surely in no case is example more necessary than in this, to animate and encourage us in the discharge of so difficult a duty, so contrary to the bent and inclination of our nature. A bare precept of self-denial in these things, and a peremptory command to sacrifice our own wills, our ease, our pleasure and reputation, yea and life itself, to the glory of God, and the good of men, would have sounded very harsh and severe, had not the practice of all this been exemplified in a pattern of so much advantage: one who in all these respects denied himself much more than is possible for us to do, who might have insisted upon a greater right, who abased himself, and stooped from a greater height and dignity, who did not submit to a condition of poverty and meanness when it was unavoidable, but chose it; who submitted to suffering, though he never deserved it, and who met with all the contempt and reproach imaginable, whilst he truly deserved the greatest esteem and reputation. Here is an example that hath all the argument, and all the encouragement that can be to the imitation of it. Was he, who had so regular a will and inclination, contented to have it crucified and thwarted? Did he, who had an unquestionable right to all the riches and enjoyments of the world, renounce them all, and embrace poverty? Did he, to whose deep wisdom and judgment all mankind ought to submit, condescend to the weakness of others, and *not please himself?* Did he, who never did the least thing in his whole life that might justly stain or blemish his reputation, patiently bear all sorts of contumely and reproach? And shall we think much to deny ourselves in any of these? Such an example is of greater force and authority than any precept or law. Well might our Lord, thus going before us, command us to follow him, saying, *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* If he thus denied himself, well may we, who have much less to deny, and much more reason and cause to do it; for, as he argues, *the disciple is not greater than his master, nor the servant than his Lord.* He did it voluntarily

ly and of choice; it is our duty: he did it for our sakes; we do it for our own: we did not deserve it of him; but he hath merited it of us.

Our Lord did not, like the Pharisees, give strict precepts to others, which they themselves did not follow. *They said, and did not; laid heavy burdens upon others, and grievous to be born, when they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers:* nor like the philosophers, who spake fine and glorious things of goodness and virtue, but did much like other men; gave strict rules to others, but lived loosely themselves; and therefore it is no wonder that their discourses had so little effect upon the lives and manners of men, and were so unavailable to the reformation of the world. Precepts of great strictness and severity are like to be obeyed very slowly and faintly, unless they be sweetned and made easy by the familiar practice of those that give them. In a way that is rugged and difficult, full of trouble and danger, it is not enough to bid men go on; but he that bids them, must go before them, and take them by the hand, and give them an example to follow his steps; without this, rules and precepts are very dry things, and give but faint and cold encouragement. Cæsar's example prevailed much more upon his soldiers, than his word of command. No man ever discoursed better of magnanimity, and greatness of mind, in great dangers and calamities, than Tully does; and yet when it came to the trial, no man ever behaved himself more faintly, and shewed greater dejection of mind, than he did; so that it is hard to say, whether his discourses are more apt to raise, or his example to damp a man's spirit. Seneca writes with wonderful wit and smartness, with great fineness and force of argument, about the contempt of the world and wealth; but then to consider how he flowed in wealth himself, and how intent he was to heap up riches beyond measure, would make a man more apt to despise him, than the world. So necessary is it that precepts, especially of great difficulty, should be backed and enforced by example, and that severe rules should be molified, and made easy by the practice of those who prescribe them. And this our Lord took particular

lar care to do in those precepts of his, which seem to offer the greatest violence to the common bent and inclination of human nature.

And so he did likewise in those virtues which are so difficult upon the account of temptation from without, as well as of inclination from within. Not to insist upon his firm resistance of all the temptations to ambition, which made not the least impression upon him; the offer of *the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, had no influence upon him. He was sometimes in great favour with the people, and mightily applauded by them, for *speaking as never man spake*, and doing such things, as no man ever did: but he was as little moved by their applause, as he was dejected by their reproaches. When the people would have made him King, to qualify him the better, as they thought, to be the Messias, he would not take so much notice of the offer, as to refuse it, but silently withdrew himself, that they knew not where to find him.

But that which I shall particularly take notice of under this head, is his great meekness; which is a very difficult virtue, if we consider the peevishness and infirmity of human nature, and the frequent temptations to passion and anger, which occur in human life, and these very sudden and surprising; so that there is nothing wherein wise men do oftener betray their own weakness, than in the matter of sudden anger. Moses, the greatest of all the prophets that had been, and who it seems was naturally of a meek temper, having this testimony given him by the spirit of God, that *he was the meekest man upon earth*; yet he miscarried in this matter, and not being able to bear the continual perverseness of that people, lost his temper, and fell into an irregular passion. But our blessed Lord, whose temper was perpetually assaulted with the highest provocations in all kinds, still maintained the evenness and meekness of his spirit.

The dulness and slowness of his disciples, to understand and believe what he had so plainly taught, and so often inculcated upon them, was a great trial of patience; which yet provoked him no farther, than to a just rebuke of their fault. The hardest words he ever gave

gave them, were, *O unwiſe and ſlow of heart to believe! how long ſhall I ſuffer you?* And when he was in the height of his ſorrow and trouble, and his diſciples were ſo unconcerned for him, as to fall aſleep, in the ſame breath that he reproves their drowſineſs, he makes an excuſe for it: *Can ye not watch with me one hour? The ſpirit indeed is willing; but the fleſh is weak.* This carriage from his friends and followers when he ſtood in moſt need of their comfort and aſſiſtance, and *his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even to the death*, was a great temptation to anger, eſpecially falling upon a ſore and afflicted mind: and yet it was ſo far from provoking his anger, that it rather moved his pity toward them.

His ſharp reproofs of the Scribes and Phariſees were but a neceſſary ſeverity, and a juſt expreſſion of his indignation at the fulſom hypocriſy of ſuch great pretenders to piety and devotion; for *he knew their hearts.* His whipping of the buyers and ſellers out of the temple, the only action of his life in which there appears any tranſport of anger, was no other but a becoming zeal for the honour of God's houſe, which he ſaw ſo notoriouſly prophaned; which zeal was warranted, after the example of Phineas, by the extraordinary occaſion of it. In all his other actions, he was perfectly meek and lowly in ſpirit, void of pride, one of the chief cauſes of inordinate anger. We cannot ſay he was never angry; but whenever he was ſo, which was very ſeldom, *he ſinned not*; it was upon great and juſt occaſion, and never to any undue degree.

And this is the more remarkable, becauſe he was very apt to receive the impreſſions of other paſſions; love and pity, which eaſily moved him to kindneſs and compaſſion. He could not forbear to weep, when he ſaw Lazarus his friends lamenting over his grave, though he knew the cauſe of their ſorrow would ſoon be removed, and turned into joy, by his reſurrection to life. Nay, he had not only this tenderneſs towards his friends, but even to his greateſt enemies. When he looked upon Jeruſalem, and foreſaw the terrible revenge that God would take upon his enemies and murderers, and beheld at a great diſtance the dreadful calamities

that were coming upon them, he could not refrain from tears. He allowed himself in these innocent and humane passions; but where there was danger of transgressing, as there is in no passion more than that of anger, he was continually upon his guard, and governed himself with great care, and never gave way to it, but upon evident and just occasion; and was never transported to any undue degree.

And yet he lived and died almost under continual provocations to it; not only from his friends and followers, but from all sorts of persons, provocations of the highest nature; if the most spiteful reproaches and injurious usage, and the most cruel persecutions and sufferings from the hands of those whom he had by all ways endeavoured to oblige; if *the contradictions of sinners whom he came to save*; in a word, if the greatest malice, accompanied with the highest ingratitude; if any, if all of these be provocations of a high nature, he was almost continually, living and dying, exercised with these. And how did he demean himself in the midst of all these provocations? With the greatest meekness and mildness imaginable, answering their bitterest reproaches and cruellest usage, either with calm reasonings, or with meek silence; that by the reasonableness and meekness of his answers and carriage, he might either convince or molify them! When his enemies charged him with the profanation of the sabbath, he only reasons the matter fairly with them, asking them, whether *it was lawful to do good, or to do evil on the sabbath-day?* telling them that *the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*; bidding them *go and learn what that meant, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* When they accused him for being a magician, and *casting out devils by the prince of the devils*; he convinceth them by reason, that this was a malicious and groundless charge, telling them, that *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*; and that *if he by Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom was divided against itself, and must fall.* When they upbraided him for *companying with publicans and sinners*; he justifies the thing, by telling them, that *the whole have no need of the physician, but the sick*; that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners*

to

to repentance. When they charged him with *blasphemy, for saying to the man sick of the palsy, thy sins be forgiven thee;* he only asks them this question, *Which is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or, take up thy bed and walk?* When they called him by the odious name of *impostor and seducer of the people,* he makes no sharp answer, but appeals to his miracles, and *the works which he had done among them,* as an unquestionable testimony that *he came from God.* When *they took up stones to throw at him,* he opposed to this hard usage, only soft, gentle words, if by that means he might stay their rage, John x. 32. *Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these works do you stone me?* Thus upon all occasions he answers their malice and rage, not with boisterous passion, but by calm reason and argument: and notwithstanding it had little effect, he continues this way to the last, and as the malice of his enemies was invincible, so was his meekness. In his last sufferings, when he was so rudely and injuriously treated at his trial, and one of the High-priest's officers struck him, in the open face of the court, he only says to him, *if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* What could be said more meekly? What more reasonably? And when, in the extremity of his sufferings, the High-priests and the soldiers, and the people, all joined together to revile him, and insult over his misery, in the most barbarous and cruel manner; instead of breaking out into passion in this anguish of his soul, he pours out his prayers to God on their behalf, and makes the most charitable excuse and apology for them, that their crime was possibly capable of: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* While he felt the bitter effects of their malice, he imputes it to their ignorance. Here is an example of meekness fit for the Son of God to give, and much more fit for the sons of men to follow; for as the wise son of Syrach says excellently, *Pride was not made for men, nor furious anger for him that was born of a woman.*

And having such an example left us of this great virtue, let us do likewise, since as St Peter tells us, *he suffered,* with all this meekness and patience, *to leave us*

an example, that ye might follow his steps; who when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. When we consider this example, can we resent so highly every petty injury and provocation; and upon every slighting word proceed to a challenge and a quarrel, and entertain fierce and implacable thoughts of revenge? When the Son of God with so much meekness endured the continual contradictions of sinners, and put up such outrageous affronts and indignities from his creatures, those ungrateful wretches whom he had made, and whom he came to save, and for whom he offered to give that very blood, which they so cruelly and maliciously shed, for the expiation of their guilt.

To all which I shall add, his readiness to forgive injuries, considering the temptations he had to wrath and revenge, from the spiteful reproaches and injurious calumnies, and continual persecution of his bitter and implacable enemies without a cause; who pursued him with incessant rage and malice, and never gave over till they had wrought his ruin, and by false accusations, and a most violent persecution, and seditious tumults and clamours, they had forced the Roman governour, contrary to his inclination, and the convictions of his own mind and conscience, and against all reason and justice, to pass sentence upon him, when he declared *he saw nothing in him worthy of death*, and to condemn him to a most painful and ignominious death. Nor did their malice end here; but they aggravated his sufferings with scurrilous taunts and reproaches, and all the rudeness and indignities imaginable: and yet all this injurious and cruel usage did not provoke him to one revengeful thought; could not extort from him so much as one peevish or misbecoming, or threatening word. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.* But notwithstanding all this provocation, he was more ready to forgive the injuries and indignities they put upon him, than they could be to offer them, and implored the mercy and forgiveness of God for them; as heartily and earnestly as they had solicited his death and destruction.

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It is easy to give precepts of forgiveness, to bid men *love their enemies, bless them that curse them, do good to them that hate them, and pray for them that despitefully use them, and persecute them; and to forgive our brother that offends us, not only to seven times, but to seventy times seven,* without stint and limit: but the practice of this is exceeding difficult; for how hard do we find it to pass by a little provocation, and upon a very small affront and indignity offered to us to suppress the thought and desire of revenge, and to command our passion from breaking out in word or deed? But much more difficult is it perfectly to forgive, to love our enemies, to pray for them, and to be ready to do them good. Such a difficult virtue as this had need of all sorts of inducements to engage us to the practice of it. And therefore our blessed Lord did not think it enough strictly to enjoin it, and to enforce it upon us by the most powerful considerations, teaching us in our daily prayers, to beg mercy and forgiveness of God upon this condition, *that we forgive others,* and not to hope for it upon other terms; telling us, that as we demean ourselves toward one another in this case of injuries and provocations, so God will deal with us; *if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.* Nothing can be urged upon us with greater force than this duty is, because upon our practice and performance of it, all our hopes of mercy and forgiveness from God are suspended. But yet it is difficult after all this, and therefore to allure us more powerfully to the practice of it, our Lord hath given us the example of it in the whole course of his life; in which, being continually assaulted with injuries and provocations, he had perpetual occasion for the practice of forgiveness; and that in greater instances, and upon occasion of greater injuries, than any of us are capable of receiving. He who could never stand in need of forgiveness from men, who needed none from God, who had it always in his power to have revenged with ease, and to the utmost, all the provocations and affronts that were offered to him; he who had none of those power-

ful inducements to forgiveneſs which we have, was thus ready to forgive; and did it perpetually, upon the greateſt, upon innumerable occaſions; he forgave his enemies all their ill-will toward him, and all their vile and malicious uſage of him throughout his whole life: but moſt remarkably at his death, when the provocations were greateſt and moſt violent, when they fell thick and in ſtorms upon him, and when they were more grievous and piercing, in the very agony and anguiſh of his ſuffering; in theſe hard and preſſing circumſtances, he was ſo far from breathing out threatning and revenge againſt the authors of his cruel ſufferings, that with his laſt breath he did moſt effectually declare his free forgiveneſs of them, and perfect charity towards them, by his fervent prayer to God for them; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

5. And laſtly, Our Saviour is likewiſe a pattern to us of the moſt needful virtues, and for the practice whereof there is the greateſt and moſt frequent occaſion in human life.

Several of theſe I have already mentioned under the former heads, as ſincerity, which hath an univerſal influence upon all our actions; and is a principal ingredient into all the duties and ſervices which we are to perform to God and men; humility and meekneſs, for the exerciſe whereof there is almoſt continual occaſion in all our converſation with others. Theſe have been ſpoken to, I ſhall therefore inſtance in ſome others, which are likewiſe of great and frequent uſe in human life.

(1) The great humanity of his carriage and deportment, of which he gave manifold inſtances, in his free and familiar converſation with all ſorts of people. He did not deſpiſe the meaneſt. How familiarly did he talk with the woman of Samaria? inſomuch that his diſciples were offended at it, and *marvelled that he talked with her.* He did not decline the converſation of the worſt of men, where he had any hope of making them better by it; and though his *companying with publicans and ſinners* was often objected as matter of ſcandal to him, yet he would not for that reaſon neglect any opportunity of doing good. He was affable to his inferiors,

riors, to the meaneſt perſon that had occaſion to ſpeak with him; yea, *he rebuked his diſciples, for forbidding the little children to come to him.* They would have kept them from him, becauſe they could not imagine to what purpoſe they ſhould be permitted to come to him: but though they were not capable of his inſtructions, yet they were of his kindneſs and bleſſing. *He took them up in his arms, and laid his hands upon them, and bleſſed them;* and he propoſed them to his diſciples as emblems of that innocency and ſimplicity, without which no man ſhall enter into the kingdom of God.

His humanity likeways appeared in the tenderneſs and compaſſion of his nature, towards all that were in want or miſery of any kind. *He healed all manner of ſickneſſes and diſeaſes among the people, and went about doing good.* And when his followers, by their long attendance upon him in deſart and ſolitary places to hear his doctrine, were pinched with hunger, he could not find in his heart to diſmiſs them without ſome refreſhment; and having no other means, did it by a miracle. He was very apt to ſympathize with the condition of others, *to weep with them that wept,* as he did with the friends of Lazarus over his grave: nay, he had a tenderneſs for his enemies; when he beheld Jeruſalem, and the ſad fate which hung over it for their obſtinate impenitency, he could not refrain from tears at the thoughts of it.

Another inſtance of his humanity was his eaſineſs to be intreated, and readineſs to yield to the requeſt of thoſe who deſired his company, or implored his help and aſſiſtance. And as he was moſt ready to do good to all, ſo he did not diſdain to receive kindneſs from any; complying chearfully with the deſires of thoſe who invited him to their houſes, and accepting kindly any well-intended reſpect. How did he reſent the extraordinary kindneſs of the devout woman, who poured the box of rich ointment upon his head; taking care that the memory of it ſhould be tranſmitted to all generations, and proclaimed over the whole world? Matth. xxvi. 13.

(2.) Another very needful virtue, and for which our

our Lord was very eminent, was his neglect and disregard of the opinion of men, in comparison of his duty. As he was not affected, much less puffed up with their applause, (which is an argument of a vain and light mind) so was he as little moved with their censures and reproaches, by which he was neither disordered in his passions, nor discouraged from well-doing. He took heed to his duty, and made sure to do the things which pleased God, and was not very solicitous what men said or thought of him. He observed in the Pharisees, how great a temptation and hinderance to the receiving of his doctrine, an undue regard to the praise and censure of men was: *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*, as he tells us, John xii. 43. and chap. v. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?* Not that we are to slight and neglect the opinion of others concerning our actions; that is pride and self conceit; and our Lord himself was not so regardless of his reputation, as not to take great care to give no just occasion of censure, no needless handle to slander and calumny; he vindicated himself upon all occasions, and was ready to give a fair and reasonable account of his actions, to those who found fault with them, nay, even maliciously carped at them; he prudently avoided occasions of offence, and by wise and cautious answers, many times avoided the snares that were laid to bring him under obloquy and reproach: but in competition with his plain duty, he neither regarded the applause nor censures of men; he complied with them in nothing that was bad, to gain their good opinion and esteem; nor was he hindered and discouraged from any thing that was good, for fear of being ill-spoken of, or of having a bad interpretation put upon his good actions.

And this is a virtue very necessary to a good man, especially in bad times, and requires a good degree of fortitude and firmness of resolution to make a man master of it. And it is not more necessary than it is reasonable; for it is not in our power, whether men shall speak well or ill of us; but it is in our power, whether we will do well or ill. It is many times impossible to

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pleaſe men, they are ſo divided in their opinions about good and evil; but we may make ſure to pleaſe God, and to gain his praiſe and approbation, *whoſe judgment is always according to truth.* It is a vain and endleſs thing to live up to the humours and opinions of men, which are variable and uncertain; but if we keep ſteady to our duty, we live to the conſciences of men, which firſt or laſt will come to themſelves, and come over to us, and approve of that which is good. This is, as St. Paul ſpeaks, *to commend ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.*

(3.) Another virtue for which there is great occaſion in human life, and for which our Lord was very remarkable, was his contentedneſs in a mean and poor condition; and ſuch was his condition to the very loweſt degree. He was deſtitute of the ordinary conveniencies and neceſſary ſupports of life; he lived generally upon the kindneſs and charity of others, and when that failed, and he wanted ordinary ſupports, as he often did, he was maintained by miracle: and yet in this mean and neceſſitous condition, he had a conſtant evenneſs and ſerenity of mind; he had no anxious care and ſolicitude upon him, *what he ſhould eat, and what he ſhould drink, or wherewithal he ſhould be cloathed;* he never murmured at the unequal providence of God, never uttered one diſcontented, or envious word at the plenty and proſperity of others; he rather pitied the misfortune of rich and great men, who were expoſed to ſo many temptations, that it was very hard for them, in his opinion, to be ſaved; but he enjoyed himſelf, and ſerved God, and went about doing good, and depended upon the providence of God for his daily food; and if at any time that was wanting, he tells his diſciples, that *He had meat to eat which they knew not of; for it was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.* By all that appears in the hiſtory of his life, (and we are ſure that it is true) no man was ever poorer, and yet no man ever more contented than he was; which is not only an example of contentedneſs to thoſe, whom the providence of God hath placed in the extremity of meanneſs and want, but a much ſtronger and more forcible argument of contentment in every condition:

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For discontent is not only the portion of the poor, but of those who have a competency, because they have not plenty; and many times of those who have plenty and abundance, because they are wanton and foolish, and know not what they would have; so that our Saviour, by giving an example of contentment to those of the poorest and meanest condition, hath given it much more to those who are in better circumstances. A narrow fortune is riches in comparison of none; a competency is plenty compared with poverty, and the want of the ordinary accommodations of life. If the Son of God submitted to the lowest and poorest condition, and bore it with so much evenness and tranquillity of mind; well may we, if God call us to it. If he, that was heir of all things, was destitute of all things, and well contented to be so; shall we murmur and repine, if we be in the same circumstances? If this example be of any force, (as it is certainly of the greatest), should the providence of God see fit to reduce us to the lowest condition of want, we have no reason for discontent; but if he affords us a competency, we have no colour and pretence for it, unless we think ourselves better than the Son of God, and can claim a greater right to the possessions and enjoyments of this world, than he that made it.

Before this example, we might have thought that poverty and meanness had been a sign of God's hatred and displeasure, or at least an argument of less love and regard: but now that we see him, whom God loved infinitely better than any man in the world, to have been one of the poorest men that ever lived; this is a demonstration, that a man may be entirely beloved of God, though he be in the poorest and most destitute condition; for in such a condition he thought fit to place his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. And if poverty be consistent with the highest degree of God's love and favour, we may bear it contentedly; and if there be any reason for contentment even in poverty, to be discontented in any condition that is above it, is shameful and intolerable. Of such force is this example of our Lord, to banish discontent from any condition we are liable to in this world. The

(4.) And

(4.) And last virtue I shall instance in, and for the exercise whereof there is very great and frequent occasion in human life, is patience under sufferings, and such a perfect resignation of ourselves to the will of God, that whatever pleaseth him should please us, how distasteful and grievous soever it be. And of this virtue our blessed Saviour was the greatest example that ever was; his whole life, from his birth to his death, was made up of persecution and patience, and was a continual exercise of this virtue. There had been great examples in all ages of the sufferings and patience of good men, which we might propound to ourselves with great advantage; and so St. James exhorts the Christians to do, Jam. v. 10. *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.* Job especially was a most eminent example in this kind: *Ye have heard,* says he, *of the patience of Job.* And all these examples are of great use, and considerable arguments to this virtue; but the pattern of our Lord's suffering and patience is a greater example, and a more powerful argument than all these. His sufferings were far greater than any man's ever were; *Never was any sorrow like to his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger:* And his patience was greater than any man's ever was, not only because he suffered more than any one of the sons of men ever did, but because he suffered without cause, being perfectly innocent, and free from the least personal fault and guilt. Well may we bear the indignation of the Lord patiently, because we have sinned against him. Whatever we suffer, our consciences tell us we have deserved it all, and much more from the hand of God, and that our punishment is always less than our iniquities have deserved. Sin is at the bottom of all our sufferings, and if we be buffeted for our faults, we ought to take it patiently. Upon this consideration, St. Peter recommends to us the example of our Lord's sufferings and patience, as a powerful argument to work the same temper and disposition in us, 1 Pet. ii. 20. 21. 22. *For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when*

when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin. Where the Apostle insinuates a twofold difference between our Lord's suffering for us, and ours. He suffered for us: but we upon our own account, and for our own faults. He was perfectly innocent, he had no sin, and yet he suffered with so much patience; much more ought we: for by how much the more guilt, so much the greater reason for patience; and the more innocent the person is that suffers, so much the more perfect and commendable is his patience.

So that the greatness of our Lord's sufferings, considered together with his perfect innocency, gives his example a peculiar force and advantage above all other examples whatsoever. And therefore the Apostle to the Hebrews, after a great number of examples of the persecution and patience of the saints in all ages, not content with these, he adds that of our Lord, as the most perfect and powerful example of all others, Heb. xii. 1. 2. 3. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.* Such contradiction of sinners; such as no man ever endured; and yet he bore all this, not with a stoical and stupid insensibility, but with a true patience. For no man had greater apprehensions of suffering, and a more quick and tender sense of it, than he had. He had not only the more manly virtues of wisdom, and resolution, and constancy; but was cloathed also with the softer passions of human nature, meekness, and compassion, and grief, and a tender sense of pain and suffering. *He took our infirmities,* says the Prophet, *and bore our griefs.* And this he expressed both in his agony in the garden, and in his behaviour upon the cross; he did not despise pain, but dreaded it, and yet submitted to it; he did not out-brave his sufferings,

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but bore them decently; he had a human sense of them but underwent them with a divine patience, resigning himself absolutely to the will of God, when he saw them coming: and when they were upon him, expressing a great sense of pain, without the least sign of impatience. And hereby he was a pattern accommodated to the weakest and tendrest of mankind; he did not give us an extravagant example of bravery, and a sturdy resolution; but, which was much fitter for us, of a patient submission to the will of God, under a great sense of suffering.

Before I come to the fifth and last advantage of our Lord's example, it will be requisite to clear what hath been said from three or four obvious objections. But this I shall reserve for another discourse.

SERMON CXCI.

The life of Jesus Christ considered, as our example.

Preached March 25th 1686.

1 PET. ii. 21.

——*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

The third sermon on this text.

THE example of Christ is an argument never unseasonable; and though it be somewhat foreign to the occasion of this day, yet it will afford us something not improper to be considered by us, concerning the blessed mother of our Lord. I have handled this argument of our Lord's example very largely, and, among other things, have shewn the manifold advantages of it, in these following respects.

I. That the example of our Lord is a most absolute

and perfect pattern, being the life of God, in the nature and likeness of man.

II. A most familiar and easy example, in which we see the several virtues of a good life practised in such instances, and upon such occasions, as do frequently happen in human life.

III. It is an encouraging example; nothing being more apt to give life to good resolutions and endeavours, than to see all that which God requires of us, performed by one in our own nature, and a man as like ourselves, as it is possible for a perfect pattern to be.

IV. It is likewise an universal example, calculated as equally as is possible for all conditions and capacities of men, and fitted for general direction and imitation of all sorts of virtue and goodness; such virtues as are the greatest and most substantial, the most rare and unusual, the most useful and beneficial to others, the most hard and difficult to be practised, and for the exercise whereof, there is the greatest and most frequent occasion in human life. There remains now only to be spoken to, the.

V. And last advantage, which I mentioned of our Lord's example, that it is, in the nature of it, very powerful to engage and oblige all men to the imitation of it. But before I enter upon this, I proposed to clear what hath been already said concerning our Lord's example, from three or four obvious objections.

The first objection is, that a great part of our Saviour's life consisted of miraculous actions, wherein we cannot imitate him.

This is very true; and for that very reason, because we cannot imitate him herein, we are not obliged to do it: but we may imitate the compassion and charity which he shewed in his miracles, by such ways and in such effects, as are within the compass of our power. We are not *anointed*, as he was, *with the Holy Ghost, and with power, to heal all manner of sickness and disease*: but we may *go about doing good*, as he did, so far as we have ability and opportunity; we may comfort those in their sickness and distress, whom we are not able in

a miraculous manner to recover and relieve; and in diſeaſes that are curable, we may help the poorer at the expence of our charity, and do that by ſlower and ordinary means, which our Saviour did by a word in an inſtant.

Secondly, Againſt the univerſality of our Saviour's example, it is objected, that he hath given us no pattern of ſome conditions and relations of life, for which there ſeems to have been as great need and reaſon, as for any other.

To this I anſwer, that though his ſingle ſtate of life did hinder him from being formally an example as to ſome of the moſt common relations, as of a father, and a huſband; yet he was virtually ſo in the principle and practice of univerſal charity; which principle, if it be truly rooted in us, will ſufficiently guide and direct us in the duties of particular relations.

And whereas it is further objected, that he hath left us no example of that, which by many is eſteemed the only religious ſtate of life, *viz.* perfect retirement from the world, for the more devout ſerving of God, and freeing us from the temptations of the world, ſuch as is that of Monks and Hermits; this perhaps may ſeem to ſome a great overſight and omiſſion: but our Lord in great wiſdom thought fit to give a pattern of a quite different ſort of life, which was, not to fly the converſation of men, and to live in a monaſtery or a wilderneſs; but to do good among men, to live in the world with great freedom, and with great innocency. He did indeed ſometimes retire himſelf, for the more free and private exerciſe of devotion; as we ought to do: but he paſſed his life chiefly in the converſation of men, that they might have all the benefit that was poſſible, of his inſtruction and example. We read that *he was carried into the wilderneſs to be tempted*; but not that he lived there, to avoid temptation. He hath given us an example of denying the world, without leaving it; and of renouncing not only the pomp and vanity, but even, the lawful enjoyments and conveniencies of life, when it may ſerve to any good end, either of glory to God, or of advantage to men; teaching us hereby, that charity is a duty, no leſs neceſſary than de-

votion; that we cannot serve God better, than by endeavouring the good and happiness of men. So that if our Saviour's example be of authority with us, that will soon decide which is the most perfect state of life, to go out of the world, or to live innocently and usefully in it. And since neither our Saviour, nor his Apostles, have recommended it to us, by their example, nor by one word of precept or counsel tending that way, it seems very plain, that they did not esteem Monkery the most perfect, much less the only religious state of life. There could not have been so deep a silence throughout the New Testament concerning so important a piece of religion, as the church of Rome would bear us in hand this is: for to be professed of some monastical order, they call *entering into religon*; and they speak of it, as the most direct and ready way to heaven; and not only so, but they gave fair encouragement to believe, that to die, or be buried in a Monk's habit, will go a great way (they are loth to tell us how far) in the carrying of a bad man towards heaven, or at least to the abatement of his pain in Purgatory.

Thirdly, It is objected, that some particulars of our Saviour's carriage towards rulers and magistrates seem liable to exception, and not proper for our imitation; as his bold and free reproofs of the Scribes and Pharisees, many of whom were chief rulers, and of greatest authority among them; and his message to Herod, *Go and tell that fox*. This opprobrious and reproachful treatment of magistrates, seems directly contrary to an express law of God, Exod. xxii. 28. *Thou shalt not revile the Gods, or judges, nor speak evil of the ruler of thy people.*

But to this the answer is plain, that our Lord used this freedom by the virtue and privilege of his prophetical office, and of his immediate commission from God; it being the office of prophets, and a part of their commission to reprove Kings and rulers with all freedom and plainness, because they were really superior to them in the execution of that office. In all positive laws of respect to superiors, there is an exception of the divine commission; because in that case, the Prophet speaks

speaks in the name, and by the authority of one infinitely greater than the greatest upon earth; as in the Lord's name, and by his commission, any man may check inferior magistrates, and that in such a manner, as would be rudeness and insolence for any other not so warranted, to do it. And of this, there are manifold examples in the Prophets of the Old Testament; and what the tenour of their commission was, we may see in that given to the Prophet Jeremiah, chap. i. ver. 10. *Behold, I have set thee over thee nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull up, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant,* (that is, to denounce judgments and calamities, or peace and prosperity to them) and ver. 17. 18. *Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the Kings of Judah, against the Princes thereof, against the Priests thereof, and against the people of the land.* This commission set him above them all in the discharge of his office: And therefore, what our Lord did in this kind, by virtue of an extraordinary commission, and the privilege of a Prophet immediately sent by God, is not to be drawn into example in ordinary cases: for we may do that by special commission from God, which the ordinary rules of duty, and respect to Princes and governors, will by no means allow to be done.

The fourth and last objection is, that our blessed Saviour does not seem to bear himself with that duty and respect towards his mother, which that relation seems to require. And to speak according to the first appearance of things, this seems to be of all other, the most exceptionable part of his life, and to require some particular and extraordinary reason, not so obvious at first sight, for the vindication of it.

There are, to my best remembrance and observation, but five passages, in the history of our Saviour's life, concerning his carriage towards his mother, and his discourse with her, and of her; in all which he seems rather to treat her with some appearance of neglect,

than with any great shew of reverence and respect. Not that we are to imagine, but that he did pay her an entire duty; for we know that he *fulfilled all righteousness*: but for reasons best known to his infinite wisdom, he thought fit very much to conceal it in his public behaviour, and to have as little notice taken of it in the history of his life.

And the first passage is, Luke ii. 48. when his parents having lost him, at last *found him in the temple disputing among the doctors*; and his mother reproved him, *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing*: He gives them this short and obscure answer, which they knew not what to make of; *How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* This happened when he was but *twelve years old*. And that we may not think, that during his minority, he did ordinarily assume this behaviour towards his parents, but only upon this first essay of his public appearance, the Evangelist purposely adds, ver. 51. that *he went down with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them*.

The second passage is John ii. 4. when his mother desiring him to work a miracle, at his first appearance and entrance upon his publick ministry, he takes occasion to declare to her, that he was discharged from her conduct and government, and this in terms to all appearance of no great respect: *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come*. Greg. Nyssen reads both sentences with an interrogation; *What have I to do with thee? is not mine hour now come?* As if he had said, *Why dost thou interpose in these matters? is not the time come, that I am to enter upon my office; and in the discharge of it, to be directed by God, and none else?*

The third passage is Matth. xii. 47. when he was told, that *his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him: Who is my mother*, says he, *and who are my brethren?* And pointing to his disciples, *Behold my mother, and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother*. Here is but little appearance of regard; for we do not find, that he left the

the business he was about, to speak with her when she desired it. Nor it seems did she understand her power so well as the church of Rome hath done since, when (as is to be seen in some of their mass books) they address to her in these terms, *Jure matris impera redemptori*; "By the authority of a mother, command the "Redeemer."

The fourth passage is not much different from the former, Luke xi. 27. when *a certain woman said to him, blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked; he said, yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* He does not deny what was said in honour of her; but turns his discourse another way: and foreseeing the danger of a superstitious veneration of her, he seems to bring her down to the same level with all sincere Christians; teaching us, that no external privilege or relation, how glorious soever, no not that of being the mother of the Son of God, was so valuable, as doing the will of God: *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it*

The last passage is at the time of his death, John, xix. 25. 26. 27. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother: when Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy Son: then saith he to the disciple, behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.* Here indeed he shewed his great kindness and concernment for her, in committing her to the care of his best beloved friend; but yet without any extraordinary demonstration of respect in the manner of it.

These are all the passages I know in the gospel, which concern our Lord's carriage towards his mother; which upon the whole matter, is so strange, that we cannot imagine but there must be some special and extraordinary reason for it; and we who have lived to see and know what hath happened in the Christian world, are now able to give a better account of this great caution and reservedness in his behaviour towards her; namely, that out of his infinite wisdom and foresight, he so demeaned himself toward her, that he might lay no temptation

tation before men; nor give the least occasion to the idolizing of her. He always called her woman; and by the privilege of his divinity and high office hardly seems to pay her the respect due to a mother, that he might restrain all Christians from worshipping her as a deity; or if they did, that they might have no colour or excuse for it, from any thing he said or did. This is so probable an account of that which might otherwise seem so unaccountable, that I persuade myself, that all unprejudiced persons will readily assent to it. And which is farther remarkable in this matter, the Apostles of our Lord in all their writings use the same reservedness; and no doubt, by the direction of the same spirit, concerning the blessed mother of our Lord. For throughout the history of the Acts, and all the epistles of the Apostles, there is but once mention made of her, and that only by the bye, Acts i. 14. where it is said, that the *disciples all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus* So far are they from proposing her for an object of our worship, that they only once make mention of her, and that joining with others in prayer and supplication to God, without any special remark concerning her; much less do they speak of any devotion paid to her.

And surely if this *blessed among women, the mother of our Lord,* (for I keep to the titles which the scripture gives her) have any sense of what we do here below, she cannot but look down with the greatest disdain upon that sacrilegious and idolatrous worship which is paid to her, to the high dishonour of the great God and our Saviour, and the infinite scandal of his religion. How can she, without indignation, behold how they play the fool in the church of Rome about her? what an idol they make of her image? and with what sottishness they give divine honour to it? How they place her in their idolatrous pictures in equal rank with the *blessed Trinity*, and turn the salutation of the Angel, *Ave Maria, Hail Mary, full of grace,* into a kind of prayer, and in their bead-roll of devotion repeat it ten times for once that they say the Lord's prayer, as of greater virtue and efficacy? And indeed they almost justle out the

the devotion due to almighty God, and our bleſſed Saviour, by their endleſs idolatry to her.

So that the greater part of their religion, both publick and private, is made up of that, which was no part at all of the religion of the Apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians; nay, which plainly contradicts it: for that expreſly teaches us, that there is but one object of our prayers, and one Mediator by whom we are to make our addreſſes to God. *There is one God; and one Mediator between God and man, the man Chriſt Jeſus,* ſays St. Paul, when he gives a ſtanding rule concerning prayer in the Chriſtian church. And yet notwithſtanding all the care that our bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles could take, to prevent the groſs idolatry of the bleſſed mother of our Lord, how blindly and wilfully have the church of Rome run into it; and in deſpite of the cleareſt evidence and conviction, do obſtinately and impudently perſiſt in it, and juſtify themſelves in ſo abominable a practice? I come now to the

V. And laſt advantage of our Lord's example, that it is in the nature of it very powerful, to engage and oblige all men to the imitation of it.

It is almoſt equally calculated for perſons of all capacities and conditions, for the wiſe and the weak, for thoſe of high and low degree; for all men are alike concerned to be happy. And the imitation of this example is the moſt ready and direct way to it, the moſt effectual means we can uſe to compaſs this great and univerſal end; nay, it is not only the means, but the end, the beſt and moſt eſſential part of it. To be like our Lord, is to be as good as it is poſſible for men to be; and goodneſs is the higheſt perfection that any being is capable of; and the perfection of every being is its happineſs.

There is a kind of contagion in all examples; men are very apt to do what they ſee others do, though it be very bad; every day's experience furniſheth us with many and ſad inſtances of the influence of bad examples; but there are peculiar charms in that which is good and excellent. A perfect pattern of goodneſs does ſtrongly allure and invite to the imitation of it, and a great example of virtue to a well-diſpoſed mind is a mighty temptation,

tation, and apt to inspirit us with good resolutions, to endeavour after that in ourselves, which we so much esteem and admire in others. And such is the example of our Lord, perfect as is possible, and yet obvious to common imitation, and as much fitted for the general direction of mankind, in all sorts of virtue and goodness, as any one single example can be imagined to be.

The virtues of his life are pure, without any mixture of infirmity and imperfection. He had humility without meanness of spirit; innocency without weakness, wisdom without cunning; and constancy and resolution in that which was good, without stiffness of conceit, and peremptoriness of humour: in a word, his virtues were shining without vanity, heroical without any thing of transport, and very extraordinary without being in the least extravagant.

His life was even and of one tenour, quiet and without noise and tumult, always employed about the same work, in doing the things which pleased God, and were of greatest benefit and advantage to men. Who would not write after such a copy; so perfect, and yet so familiar, and fit for our imitation? Who would not be ambitious to live the life which God lived, when he was pleased to become man and dwell among us?

We are ambitious to imitate those whom we esteem, and are apt to have their example in great dearness and regard, from whom we have received great kindness and mighty benefits. This pattern, which our religion proposeth to us, is the example of one whom we ought to reverence, and whom we have reason to love above any person in the world; it is the example of our Lord and master, of our Sovereign and our Saviour, of the founder of our religion, and of the author and finisher of our faith; it an example that carries authority with it, and commands our imitation. You call me Lord and Master, says he himself, recommending to us the example of his own humility, John xiii. 13. 14. *You call me Lord and Master, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet,* that is, stoop to the lowest and meanest office to serve one another;

other; *for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

Yet farther, it is the example of our best friend and greatest benefactor, of him who laid down his life for us, and sealed his love to us with his own blood; and while we were bitter enemies to him, did and suffered more for us, than any man ever did for his dearest friend. How powerfully must such a pattern recommend goodness, and kindness, and compassion to us, who have had so much comfort and advantage from them? Had not the son of God commiserated our case, and pitied and relieved us in our low and wretched condition, we had been extremely and for ever miserable, beyond all imagination, and past all remedy. All the kindness and compassion, all the mercy and forgiveness he would have us practise towards one another, he himself first exercised upon us; and surely we have a much greater obligation upon us to the practice of these virtues than he had. For he did all this for our sakes; we do it for our own. We have a natural obligation, both in point of duty and interest: he was voluntary, and what he took upon himself, that he might at once be a Saviour and an example to us. He that commands us to do good to others, was a great benefactor; he that requires us to forgive our enemies, shed his own blood for the forgiveness of our sins; while we were enemies to him, laid down his life for us, making himself the example of that goodness, which he recommends us to shew to others.

Are any of us reduced to poverty and want? let us think of him, who *being Lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich, for our sakes became a beggar, that we thorough his poverty might be made rich.* Are we persecuted for righteousness sake, and exercised with sufferings and reproaches? *Let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.*

When we are ready to be discouraged in well-doing, by the opposition we meet withal from the ingratitude of men, and the malicious interpretation of our good actions, perverting the best things, done with the best

mind

mind and to the best ends, to some ill purpose and design *consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds.*

Can we be proud, when the son of God humbled himself, and became of no reputation; emptied himself of all his glory, and was contented to be despised and rejected of men? Shall we be covetous, and thirst after the things of this world, when we consider how the Son of God despised them, and trampled upon them? Shall we contemn and despise the poor; nay, can we chuse but esteem them for his sake, whom they resemble, and whose low and indigent condition in the world hath made poverty, not only tolerable, but glorious? Can we be peevish and froward, and apt to fly out into passion upon every little occasion, when we consider the meekness of the son of God, and with what serenity and evenness of mind he demeaned himself under great and continual provocations? Shall we be discontented in any condition, when we consider how contented the Son of God was in the meanest and most destitute condition; how he welcomed all events, and was so perfectly resigned to the will of his heavenly Father, that whatsoever pleased God, pleased him? Shall we be so ready to separate from the communion of the church of God, upon pretence of something that we think amiss, or less pure and perfect, (which will always be in this world) when the Son of God lived and died in the communion of a church guilty of great corruptions both in doctrine and practice, such as can with no colour be objected to ours?

Shall we resent injuries, slanders and calumnies so heinously, as to be out of all patience, when we consider with what meekness of temper, and how little disturbance of mind the Son of God bore all these? *How he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and withheld not his face from shame and spitting? How he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as the sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; being reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously?* Such vile and barbarous usage the Son of God met withal; and yet under

der all this, he possessed his soul in patience: and do we expect to be better treated than he was? Was goodness itself contented to be traduced, and evil spoken of, perfect innocence to be slandered and persecuted; and shall we who are sinners, great sinners, think ourselves worthy to escape these things, and too good to have that done to us, which was done to one infinitely better than we are? It is our Lord's argument, and there is great weight and reason in it; *if the world hate you, ye know, that it hated me, before it hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than the lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; it is enough for the disciple, that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord: if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of the household?*

Can we entertain thoughts of revenge, when we have such a pattern of forgiving before us, who poured out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them that shed it, and spent his last breath in fervent and charitable prayers for his betrayers and murderers? *Lord, endow us with the like temper; but do not try us with the like sufferings.*

Thus, by setting the example of our Lord before us, and keeping this pattern always in our eye, we may continually correct all our own errors and defects, all the distempers of our minds, and the faults and irregularities of our lives; we may argue ourselves into all kind of virtue and goodness, and from such an example be strongly excited, and sweetly led to the practice of it.

Let us not be discouraged by the consideration of our own weakness, for he who hath given us such an example of virtue, is ready likewise to give us his holy Spirit, to assist and enable us to conform ourselves to this pattern of our Lord and Master, and to follow the blessed steps of his holy life.

Now the God of peace, &c.

SERMON CXCII.

The sufferings of Christ considered, as a proper means of our salvation.

Preached on Good-Friday.

1 COR. i. 23. 24.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

THE sufferings of the Son of God for the sins of men, as they are a subject never improper to be insisted on; so are they more especially seasonable at this time, which the Christian church hath for so many ages set apart for the solemn commemoration of them, in order to our more due preparation for the receiving the sacrament at Easter; which next after the Lord's day (which was set apart by the Apostles for a weekly commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection) is the first and most solemn festival that is taken notice of in ecclesiastical antiquity, to be generally observed by Christians; at which time all Christians that were admitted to those sacred mysteries, did receive the holy sacrament; and for this reason I have pitched upon this subject at this time.

Among all the prejudices that were raised against the Christian religion, when it first appeared in the world, this was the greatest of all other, that the first author of this doctrine should come to so miserable and shameful an end, as to die upon the cross; that the Son of God should be delivered into the hands of men, to be so cruelly and ignominiously handled. This both Jews and Greeks laid hold on, as the most popular

popular objection against Christianity, and matter of just reproach to that religion, which pretended to be brought from heaven by the Son of God: for though he called himself the Son of God, yet he died like a man; and not only so, but suffered as a malefactor.

But, notwithstanding the odium of this objection, the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, who were sent by him to publish his doctrine to the world, did not in the least endeavour to hide and dissemble the matter; but did openly, and without disguise, declare to the world, that he in whom they believed, and endeavoured to persuade others to believe, was for speaking the truth, which he had heard from God, arraigned at Jerusalem, and there by wicked hands crucified and slain. And though they knew that this seemed very foolish and absurd, both to Jews and Gentiles whom they designed to convert to Christianity, and did extremely prejudice them against it; yet nevertheless they persisted in the course they had begun, leaving God to do his own work, in his own way; and they found the success of it. For though it was a very plain story which they told the world, and appeared even ridiculous to those who thought themselves the wisest and ablest judges of these matters; yet being the truth of God, it had a mighty efficacy upon the minds of men, notwithstanding all the prejudice that was raised against it. *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*; by this doctrine, which seemed so absurd to human reason, to gain many to the belief and entertainment of it.

Indeed it was not suited to the genius either of the Jews or Gentiles, for they, according to their different ways of institution, expected quite another thing. ver. 22. *The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. The Jews require a sign;* they expected the Apostles should have given some extraordinary testimony from heaven, such as was Elias his calling for fire down from heaven, to consume those that opposed and resisted them. Such things as these they read of the Prophets in their law, and they expected the Messias would do the same, and greater things. And though in truth he did so, wrought more and greater miracles

than Moses and all the Prophets had done before him, yet their curiosity was not satisfied; and notwithstanding the great works which he did among them, they were continually importuning him for a sign; Mat. xii. 38. *Then certain of the Scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.* This seems a strange and unreasonable demand, considering the many and great works he had done among them, which were so generally known. So that in all probability, it was some particular and peculiar kind of miracle which they desired, as appears from Math. xvi. 1. *The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him, that he would shew them a sign from heaven.* He had wrought many miracles on earth, in healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, in cleansing the lepers, and making the lame to walk; but these they looked upon as an inferior sort of miracles; here was all this while no extraordinary thing immediately from heaven, if they could once see that, they would be satisfied. But when no such thing was done, and at last God permitted him to die upon the cross, as an impostor and seditious person; and it appeared plainly that he, who pretended to free others from diseases, could not save himself from death; this confirmed them in their unbelief, and upon good reason as they thought. And that this was a sign which they particularly expected, and thought they had cause so to do, appears by their upbraiding of him with the want of it in the time of his suffering, Math. xxvii. 39. *And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it up in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* And it was not only the malice and ignorance of the common people that objected this to him; but even the Priests, and Scribes, and Elders, insisted upon the same thing; ver. 41. 42. 43. *Likewise also the chief Priests mocking him, with the Scribes and Elders, said, he saved others, himself he cannot save: If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God.* By this passage

you

You see what it was the Jews expected; that if our Saviour had been the Son of God, he should have saved himself; when they went about to crucify him, that God should have rescued him out of their hands, and given some extraordinary testimony from heaven to his innocency; and for this reason, the preaching of Christ crucified was very offensive to them: *The Jews require a sign; but we preach Christ crucified.*

Such was the temper and disposition of the Jews: but now the Gentiles, according to their way of institution, expected that the Apostles should have discoursed to them upon philosophical principles, and have demonstrated things to them in their way. *The Greeks seek after wisdom;* they were great searchers after wisdom and knowledge, and they valued nothing but what had the appearance of it, and what was delivered with great sharpness of wit and reasoning, and set off with art and eloquence. Had the Apostles pretended to some new theory of natural or moral philosophy, and discoursed to them about the first principles of all things, about the chief good, or about the nature of the soul, they would have heard them with great patience and delight. Nothing but deep and subtle speculations, about these kind of arguments, did relish with them, and please their palates. But the history of our Saviour, his life, and death, and resurrection, and the plain precepts of his doctrine, were dry and insipid things to them, and were so far from having a shew of wisdom and philosophy, that they appeared foolish and ridiculous to them.

But the design of God in the Christian religion, being not to please the humour, and gratify the curiosity of men; but really to do them good, and to reform the manners of mankind, he used quite another method; which how offensive soever it might be to those who thought themselves wise, yet it was really the wisest and most powerful means to that end: so the Apostle tells us here in the text; *But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness: but unto them that are called,* that is, to those who'e minds are duly prepared to consider things impartially, and to receive the truth, *the power of God, and the wis-*

dom of God; a most wise and powerful means to reform the world, an eminent instance of the divine power and wisdom.

In these words, we have these two things considerable:

First, The exception which the world took at the doctrine of the gospel, upon account of our Saviour's sufferings: *Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.*

Secondly, That notwithstanding the seeming unreasonableness and absurdity of it, it was a most wise and effectual contrivance for the end to which it was designed and appointed: *But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* I shall speak something to each of these, as briefly and plainly as I can. I begin with the

First, The exception which the world took at the doctrine of the gospel, upon account of our Saviour's sufferings. The world were generally offended at it, but not all upon the same account; the Jews took one kind of exception against it, and the Heathen another: *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* They were both offended at the same thing, the low and suffering condition of our Saviour; but not upon the same reason. The Jews thought, that this mean appearance and condition of our Saviour, was unsuitable to the power of God; and the Heathen, that it was not agreeable to the wisdom of men.

The Jews from the tradition of their fathers, to which (just as the church of Rome does now-a-days) they paid a greater reverence, than to the written word of God, were possessed with a strong persuasion, that the Messias whom they expected, and was foretold by the Prophets, was to be a great temporal prince, to appear in great splendor and glory, to be a mighty conqueror, and not only to free them from the Roman yoke, which they were then under; but to subdue all nations to them, and so bring them under their dominion and government. And this did so generally prevail among them, that even the disciples of our Saviour were as strongly possessed with this conceit, as any of the rest; insomuch

insomuch that the mother of James and John made it her solemn request to our Saviour, that *her two sons sit, one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom.* And though he had told his disciples just before, that *he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be betrayed and put to death;* yet the other conceit of his temporal dominion and greatness did so possess their minds, *that they could not understand this saying, and it was hid from them that they perceived it not,* as St. Luke tells us, Luke ix. 45. Nay, even after his death and resurrection, when he appeared to them, this still stuck in their minds, as appears by that question which they asked him immediately before his ascension, Acts i. 6. *When they were come together, they asked of him, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* They took it for granted the Messias would do it one time or other, and they enquire of him, whether that were the time.

So that the Jews being so firmly fixed in this conceit of the temporal reign of the Messias, nothing could be a greater stumbling block to them, than the mean and suffering condition, in which our Saviour appeared. The meanness of his birth and life was a great objection against him; but when they saw him put to death so ignominiously, and that he did not then shew his glory and power, to save himself from that cruel and shameful death, they could rather believe any thing than that this was the Messias foretold, and whom they had so long expected. They made full account that the Messias, whenever he came, would live in great splendor and glory, and do great things for the advantage and honour of their nation; the least they expected from him was their deliverance from the Roman yoke, and the establishing of the throne of David for ever; or if his beginning had been obscure, that he would at last break forth in great lustre and majesty; or, if they could have supposed that the Messias should be persecuted, and condemned, and nailed to the cross, yet they doubted not but then God would have given testimony to him by some sign from heaven, and have rescued him from the cross in a miraculous manner: but

seeing

seeing nothing of all this, nothing but poverty and meanness, reproach and suffering attending him, they concluded, whatever miracles he pretended to, this could not be the Son of God, the true Messias.

On the other side, the heathen philosophers, who were not possessed with these conceits about the Messias, they were offended at the unreasonableness and folly, as they thought, of the Apostles doctrine, who went about to perswade the world, that a man who had lately suffered and was crucified at Jerusalem, was a great Prophet come into the world; nay, the Son of God, in whom all men ought to believe, and by whom they ought to hope for life and salvation: as if it were reasonable to think, that God would have exposed the most innocent and virtuous person that ever was, to so great reproach and sufferings, that the Son of God should die, and that life and immortality were to be hoped for from him, who was crucified and put to death. This they looked upon as a story so ill framed, that, to all wise and sagacious men, it destroyed its own credit and belief. For tho' they said he was risen again from the dead, yet before that could be entertained by men of philosophical minds, there were many deep points to be determined, as concerning the nature of the soul, and whether it can subsist separately from the body, and whether a body once dead can be restored to life again, and re-united to the soul.

And as for his doctrine, which the Apostles pretended to deliver, it was a plain, and rude thing, without art or eloquence, nothing of deep speculation, or strict demonstration in it: in short, so far from being worthy of *a teacher come from God*, that it was below the pitch of an ordinary philosopher. These and such like things were, in all probability, the exceptions which the heathen philosophers took at the Apostles preaching, concerning our Saviour's death, and his doctrine; and they had some colour in them.

But upon impartial examination, it will appear, that notwithstanding these exceptions, the sufferings of our Saviour, considered with all the circumstances that belong to them, were a very wise and effectual method

made

made use of by almighty God, for the reforming and saving the world. Which brings me to the

Second thing I propounded to speak to from these words, namely, to vindicate the wisdom of this design and contrivance of almighty God, for the salvation of mankind by the sufferings of his Son from the seeming absurdity and unreasonableness of it. *But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* And,

First, The Jews had no sufficient ground, to be so much offended at the sufferings of the Messias. For,

I. They had no reason to expect that the Messias should be a great temporal Prince, if they had attended to the predictions of their Prophets concerning him, which ought to have been their rule: for they affirm no such thing of him. All that they say of him, plainly refers to a spiritual kingdom, that he should *rule in righteousness*, that he should *preach the gospel to the poor, and open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf, and make the lame walk*; that he should *finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make intercession for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.* So that if they had not entertained a very groundless and carnal conceit concerning him, they could not so widely have mistaken the ancient prophecies of him, which ought to have guided them in these matters, and which they might have seen all plainly fulfilled in the person of our Saviour.

II. The predictions concerning him do most expressly foretel his death and sufferings, and that with very particular circumstances: David in the xxiid Psalm; Isaiah quite throughout his liiid chapter: and Danieldoes particularly point out the time when he should be cut off. So that they had all the reason in the world to expect that the Messias, when he came, should be *despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief*; that he should *be scourged and buffeted, oppressed and afflicted, and at last cut off out of the land of the living.* Nay, if it had been otherwise, they had had no reason to have owned him for the true Messias.

III. As for signs to evidence him to be the Son of God; though God did not gratify their curiosity as to the

the nature and manner of them, yet he gave the greatest testimonies that ever were given to any prophet, and abundantly enough to satisfy any reasonable man, that he was *a teacher come from God.* Indeed his miracles were not generally so prodigious and amazing: but they were many and publick, they were useful and beneficial to mankind; and for that reason, more likely to come from God. He did not call for fire from heaven to destroy his enemies; but he gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and health to those that were sick of the most dangerous and inveterate diseases, and (which was always reckoned among the greatest and most undoubted kind of miracles) life to the dead. And when he himself was put to death by the malice of the Jews, though he did not *come down from the cross,* and was not rescued from his sufferings by an immediate hand from heaven, to triumph over the malice and cruelty which they were exercising upon him, (which was the miracle they required to be shown) yet God was not wanting to give testimony to him in a most remarkable manner, by prodigies which immediately followed his death; in the strange darkness which came upon the land; in the terrible earthquake which rent the veil of the temple, and tore the rocks asunder; in the opening of the graves, and the rising of the dead; and, lastly, in his own miraculous resurrection, the third day after he was crucified: so that here was no sign wanting in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, to convince their obstinacy and unbelief, unless it were that very sign which they demanded. God did enough to satisfy every man's reason; and he is not wont to gratify the humour and curiosity of men. If men be so unreasonable as to expect this from him, God lets such men continue in their wilful blindness and infidelity.

Secondly, Neither had the Heathen philosophers reason, upon account of the story of our Saviour's sufferings to look upon the gospel as so absurd and unreasonable a thing; as will, I hope, evidently appear, if you will be pleased to consider with me these following particulars:

I. That there is nothing more inculcated in the writings of the wisest and most famous of the Heathen philosophers than this, that worldly greatness and prosperity

s not to be admired, but despised by a truly wise man. Aristotle in his ethicks, makes it the property of a magnanimous and great spirit, not to admire greatness, and power, and victory, and riches. So that according to their own principles, our Saviour was not to be despised upon account of his meanness and sufferings. He might be a great prophet, and come from God, though he enjoyed nothing of worldly greatness and prosperity.

II. They tell us likewise, that men may be very virtuous and good, and dearly beloved of God, and yet be liable to great miseries and sufferings. And to this purpose I could bring you almost innumerable testimonies out of the books of the philosophers. Max. Tyrius the Platonist, speaking of Ulysses, says, "that the Gods forced him "to wander, and beg, and wear rags, and suffered him to "be reproached and reviled, for the love and friendship "that they bare to him." Epictetus, a poor slave, but inferior to none of all the philosophers for true virtue and wisdom, "thanks the gods for his mean condition, and "says, He did not believe himself to be one jot the less "beloved by them for that reason; and that he was not "cast into a state of poverty and contempt, because the "Gods hated him, but that he might be fit to be a witness to others."

III. They tell us likewise, that a state of affliction and suffering is so far from rendering a man unfit to reform the world, and to be an example of virtue, that none so fit as those that are in such circumstances. Arrian, in his dissertations of Epictetus, describing a man fit to reform the world, whom he calls the apostle and messenger, the minister and preacher of God to mankind, gives this character of him: "He must, says he, "be without house and harbour, and destitute of all "worldly accommodations;" (just as it is said of our Saviour, that *the Son of man had not where to lay his head*;) "he must be armed with such a patience by the "greatest sufferings, as if he were a stone and devoid of "sense; he must be a spectacle of misery and contempt "to the world." And to mention no more, Plato in the second book of his common wealth, when he would represent a righteous man, giving the most unquestionable testimony to the world of his virtue, "Let him, says "he,

" he be stript of all things in this world, except his
" righteousness; let him be poor and diseased, and
" accounted a wicked and unjust man; let him be whip-
" ped and tormented, and crucified as a malefactor;
" and yet all this while retain his integrity:" which does so exactly agree with our Saviour's condition, that had he not wrote before his time, one would have thought he had alluded to it.

IV. As it seems very convenient, (I am not so bold as to say it was necessary, and that God had no other way to bring about the salvation of men; for what are we, that we should prescribe to God, and set bounds to infinite wisdom?) I say, as it seems very reasonable, that, in order to our salvation, the Son of God, who was to be the author of it, should become man, both that he might be an example of holiness, and an expiation for sin; and that he should be born after the manner of other men, to satisfy us, that he was really of the same nature with us, that so he might converse more familiarly with us, and might be a more easy, and encouraging, and imitable example of all holiness and virtue; so likewise was it convenient, that he should be subject to the miseries and sufferings of our nature, that through the several states and conditions of humanity, he might have an experimental knowledge of the sufferings that human nature is liable to; and from his own sense of our infirmities, might be a more *merciful and compassionate High-priest.* And this the Apostle expressly takes notice of, Heb. v. that it was convenient, that *our High-priest should be taken from among men,* that he might learn to be compassionate, by knowing experimentally what it was to be tempted and afflicted; the knowledge of experience being the strongest motive and incitement to pity; and consequently to give us the greater assurance of his tender affection to us.

It was of great use, that he should live in so mean and afflicted a condition, to confound the pride and vanity, and fantastry of the world, and to convince men of these two great truths, that God may love those whom he afflicts, and that men may be innocent, and virtuous, and contented, in the midst of poverty, and reproach, and suffering. Had our blessed Saviour been a great worldly

worldly prince, his influence and example might possibly have made more hypocrites and servile converts, but it would not have tended one whit to make men more inwardly good and virtuous. The great arguments that must do this, must be fetched, not from the pomp and prosperity of this world, but from the happiness and misery of the other. Besides, had our Saviour appeared in any great power and splendor, the Christian religion could not have so clearly been acquitted from the suspicion of a worldly interest and design.

And then the scripture assigns very plain and excellent reasons of his suffering of death, that he might *make expiation for the sins of the whole world*; that he might *take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, and put an end to that troublesome and unreasonable way of worship by sacrifice, which was in use both among Jews and Heathens; and, that by *conquering death, and him that had the power of it*, he might *deliver those, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage*, as the Apostle speaks, Heb. ii. 14. For though the death of Christ, barely considered in itself, be far from an encouragement to us to hope for immortality; yet the death of Christ, considered together with his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, is the clearest, and most sensible, and most popular demonstration that ever was in the world, of another life after this, and a blessed immortality. So that considering our Saviour rose from the dead, it is far from being ridiculous, to rely upon one that died, for our hopes of immortality.

V. As for the plainness of our Saviour's doctrine, and of the instruments whereby it was propagated, this is so far from being an objection against it, that it is the great commendation of it. It contains a plain narrative of our Saviour's life, and miracles, and death, and resurrection, and ascension into heaven, and a few plain precepts of life; but the most excellent and reasonable, and the freest from all vanity and folly, that are to be met with in any book in the world. And can any thing be more worthy of God, or more likely to proceed from him, than so plain and useful a doctrine as

this? Lawgivers do not uſe to deliver their laws in eloquent language, to ſet them off with flouriſh of ſpeech, and to perſuade men to a liking of them by ſubtile and artificial inſinuations; but plainly, and in few words, to declare their will and pleaſure.

And for the inſtruments God was pleaſed to make uſe of for the publiſhing of this doctrine, we grant they were generally rude and unlearned men, and our religion hath no reaſon to be aſhamed of it; for this was very agreeable to the ſimplicity of the whole deſign, that all things ſhould be managed in the plaineſt manner; that Chriſtianity might be introduced in ſuch a way, as there might be no poſſible ſuſpicion of human contrivance, or worldly deſign in it.

The religion itſelf was ſimple and plain, there were no worldly inducements to the embracing of it, but all imaginable diſcouragements upon that account; the inſtruments of propagating it were ſimple and plain men, unaſſiſted by learning or art, by ſecular power and authority; which is ſo far from being a diſparagement to our religion, that it is a great reputation to it, and a plain evidence of its divine original, that it was from God, and was countenanced and carried on by him, *not by might nor by power, but by the ſpirit of the Lord.*

And in truth, conſidering the nature of this doctrine, which conſiſted either of plain matter of fact, or of eaſy and familiar precepts and rules for a good life, the apoſtles were as fit for the propagating of it, as any ſort of perſons in the world: for it did not require depth of underſtanding, or ſharpneſs of wit to comprehend it, and declare it to others; but honeſty and integrity of mind, zeal and induſtry to promote it; in which qualities the apoſtles excelled the philoſophers and beſt learned perſons in the world: and provided an inſtrument be ſufficient and competent for its end, it matters not how plain and unpoliſhed it be; for inſtruments are not intended for ornaments, but for uſe. Now, the apoſtles of our Saviour, though they were illiterate and unbred, were as competent witneſſes of matter of fact, as any other perſons: for there is no wit or learning required, to relate what a man hath ſeen and heard. Nay, the more ſimple and plain, the leſs eloquent

quent and artificial any relation is, the more likely it is to be true, and to gain belief.

Thus you see, that notwithstanding the seeming unreasonableness and absurdity of the doctrine of the gospel, it is a most wise and effectual contrivance for the reforming and saving of mankind. *But unto them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

The proper inference from all this, is to stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment and admiration of the wisdom and goodness of God, in the salvation of men by Jesus Christ. We are most apt to admire that wisdom which finds out such means to an end, as human wisdom would have been least apt to devise, and hit upon; and yet the more we consider them, the more we must approve their fitness. Such is the design of the recovery and redemption of mankind, by the death and sufferings of the Son of God. However it may appear to rash and inconsiderate men, who judge superficially, and according to the uppermost appearances of things, to be a very unlikely and improbable design; yet upon a thorough and impartial examination of things we shall find, that God's way is the wisest, and that in the management of this design, he hath outdone the utmost prudence and wisdom of men, and hath ordered things to infinitely more advantage, than they would have been, in any of those methods which the short and imperfect wisdom of carnal men would have been most apt to pitch upon. Ignorant, and conceited, and prejudiced men, may censure it for folly; but the angels, more intelligent and discerning creatures than we are, and of a deeper reach, do look upon it with wonder and astonishment. So the Apostle tells us, 1 Pet. i. 12. where speaking of the gospel, he calls it a thing *which the angels desire to look into.* An allusion to the cherubims, who looked earnestly upon the mercy-seat which was over the ark, as if they would pry into it.

And then, let us acknowledge the infinite goodness of God, in saving us by the death and sufferings of his Son, us vile and miserable sinners. Had we been the most innocent and righteous, and the dearest friends

to him in the world, what could he have done more? How could he possibly have testified greater love to us, than *to give his Son to die for us?* Here is goodness without bounds, love without parallel and example; for *greater love than this hath no man, that a man could lay down his life for his friend.* This is the highest pitch that human affection ever attained to, to die for one's friend: *But herein hath God commended his love to us, that while we were enemies, he gave his Son to die for us.*

This is that which we are to commemorate at this season, and by the commemoration thereof, to prepare ourselves for the receiving of the blessed sacrament of his body and blood, which was broken and shed for us. The consideration whereof, as it should excite us to a hearty sorrow and repentance for sin, so should it also inflame us with love to Christ, who, by suffering such things for us, hath laid upon us an eternal obligation of love and obedience to him. The remembrance of whose death should not only put us into a present fit and passion of grief and love, but should be the ground of lasting affections and resolutions; the thoughts of what he hath done and suffered for us should make us ambitious to do or suffer any thing for him. What should not we be willing to part with for him, who did not think his own life and his glory dear to him for our sakes? Did he die for us? and shall we think much to live to him? Did he become miserable for our sakes? and shall we think much to become holy and happy for his sake and for our own?

Such affections and holy resolutions the consideration of our Saviour's death and sufferings should be apt to excite in us. What grief, what love, what thankfulness should the remembrance of his dying love work in us! when we consider seriously the many and mighty blessings and benefits which flow to us out of his wounds, and are taking *the cup of salvation* into our hands, how should *our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name, who pardoneth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases; who redeemeth our life from destruction, and crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercy! To him, therefore, our gracious and good God, let us give all thanks, adoration, and praise.* Amen.

SER-

SERMON CXCIII.

The evidence of our Saviour's resurrection.

ACTS i. 3.

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

THese words comprehend in short the whole evidence of our Saviour's resurrection, which may be referred to these four heads:

First, His appearance to them after his death and passion: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion. To whom;* that is, to the apostles whom St Luke had mentioned just before. *After he had given commandment to the apostles, whom he had chosen; to whom also*, &c.

Secondly, The proof of the reality of his appearance: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs*, ἐν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις, *idque compluribus argumentis*, saith Erasmus, "and that by many certain and undoubted proofs, or arguments."

Thirdly, The duration and continuance of his appearance to them: *Being seen of them forty days.*

Fourthly, The subject-matter of his discourse with them: *And speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* Each of these affords us a considerable evidence of Christ's resurrection.

First, His appearance to them after his death and passion: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion.* In which words, there are three things very considerable, and which give great evidence to our Saviour's resurrection.

I. His appearance to his apostles.

II. That he was really alive, and his body vitally united to his ſoul.

III. And this after he was really dead, *after his paſſion*; that is, after he was crucified, dead, and buried, he was raiſed to life again. I ſhall ſpeak briefly of theſe.

I. His appearance to his apoſtles: *To whom alſo he ſhewed himſelf alive.* The apoſtles are here only mentioned, becauſe this is here ſpoken of, in order to their deſignation and appointment to be the witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection to the world, as the great confirmation of that doctrine which they were to publiſh: but becauſe I am conſidering his appearance after his reſurrection, as an evidence of the truth of it, I ſhall therefore take in his appearance to others alſo of his diſciples and followers, and conſider likewiſe, why he only appeared to his own followers, and not alſo to the unbelieving Jews, who had put him to death, for the full conviction of his enemies and murderers, and the converſion of that whole nation, to whom he was primarily ſent.

In conſidering his ſeveral appearances, not only to his apoſtles, but to his other diſciples and followers, that I may give the ſhorteſt and fulleſt view of them, I ſhall take them as they are briefly ſummed up by St Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 4. *&c.* where giving an account of the ſum of his doctrine among the Corinthians, he tells us, that the foundation of all his preaching was the death and reſurrection of Chriſt. *I delivered unto you firſt of all, that which I alſo received, how that Chriſt died for our ſins, according to the ſcriptures; and that he was buried, and that he roſe again the third day, according to the ſcriptures.* And then follows the particular evidence of his reſurrection, ver. 5. *And that he was ſeen of Cephas.* St Paul here takes no notice of his firſt appearance to the devout women, who brought ſpices and ointments to the ſepulchre, *Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women,* as we find, Luke xxiv. 10. The reaſon of which ſeems to be this, becauſe his firſt appearance was in conſideration of their piety and affection to him, and of the weakneſs of their ſex, their faith being liable to be firſt ſtaggered; and

and they were only to relate it to the apostles, and to be honoured with carrying the first news of it, not to be witnesses of it to the world; so that this appearance was only for the private confirmation of their faith, and therefore not particularly taken notice of by St Paul among the public evidences of Christ's resurrection.

He was seen of Cephas. This is mentioned Luke xxiv. 34. *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*

St Paul goes on; *and then of the twelve.* The college of the apostles, because their number was twelve by our Saviour's institution, are most frequently called the twelve, though at some meetings some one of them might perhaps be absent: it is true, there was a short interruption by the miscarriage of Judas from the time of our Saviour's apprehension, to his ascension, and then they are called the eleven, as before and after they are called the twelve; yea, at this first appearance of our Saviour to them, when they were but ten, Thomas being absent, they are called the eleven; Mark. xvi 14. *He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat;* because they were then but eleven in all. And indeed in this text of St Paul, both the vulgar translation, which certainly follows a very ancient copy, and St Ambrose there, instead of twelve, render it eleven; so that St Paul probably means our Saviour's first appearance to them, mentioned by St Mark, where they are also called the eleven, though Thomas was absent: which is the reason why St Paul says afterwards, at the 7th verse, that he was seen of all the apostles, that is, Thomas also being present, as I shall shew by and by.

After that, he was seen by above five hundred brethren at once. This was the most solemn appearance of all, mentioned Matth. xxviii. 10. and John xxi. 1. where our Saviour appointed a general meeting of all his disciples and followers. *Go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me.* Ver. 16. *They went into Galilee into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them.* This mountain, according to the ancient tradition, was mount Tabor.

There

There is one conſiderable difficulty concerning the greatneſs of this number of five hundred; namely, that after our Saviour's aſcenſion, we find, Acts i. 15. that after their return from mount Olivet, from whence our Saviour aſcended, to Jeruſalem, the whole number of their meeting was but *an hundred and twenty*, for ſo it is expreſsly ſaid, *the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty*; that is, of the perſons there met. Now, we cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe, that any of thoſe *five hundred*, who had ſeen him after his reſurrection, were fallen off from them.

For the clear ſolution of this, it is to be conſidered, that the great meeting of *five hundred* was in Galilee, where our Saviour's reſidence chiefly had been, and where he had preached moſt conſtantly, and by conſequence he had probably there the greateſt number of followers, which was the reaſon why he choſe to appear there, and appointed that place for the general meeting. After which, the apoſtles who went thither by our Lord's appointment, together with others who accompanied them from Jeruſalem, returned back: but his followers who lived in Galilee remained there; ſo that there might very well be *five hundred* at the meeting in Galilee, and but *an hundred and twenty at Jeruſalem*.

St Paul goes on, ver. 7. *After that he was ſeen of James*. This particular appearance of our Lord to St James the brother of our Lord, is no where mentioned in the evangeliſts. St Paul probably had it from the common tradition mentioned by St Jerom, out of the Hebrew goſpel of the Nazarenes, in which are ſeveral paſſages omitted by St Matthew, and this for one: "That our Lord, immediately after he had riſen, "went and appeared to James; for James had vowed "that hour that he drank of the cup of the Lord, (*viz.* "in the ſacrament), he would not eat bread, till he ſaw "him riſen from the dead. The Lord, when he ap- "peared to him, ſaid, Bring hither bread and a table; "and he took the bread, and bleſſed, and brake it, and "gave it to James the Juſt, and ſaid to him, My bro- "ther, eat thy bread; for the Son of man has riſen from "among them that ſleep." To this tradition St Paul probably alludes; but then ἔπειτα, which we tranſlate *afterwards*

afterwards or *then*, ought to be rendered, as it elsewhere is, *præterea, besides, moreover he appeared to James*, without denoting the order of the time; for, according to this tradition, it was presently after his resurrection, before he had appeared to the other apostles.

It follows, *Then he was seen of all the apostles*; that is, by Thomas, as well as the rest. And this was his second appearance to the apostles together; of which St Luke gives us an account, Luke xxiv. 5. and St John, chap. xx. 19.

And last of all, he was, says St Paul, *seen of me also, as an abortive, or one born out of due time.* This he speaks of the appearance of our Lord to him in his way to Damascus, whereby he was in a very powerful and extraordinary manner on a sudden converted to Christianity.

Thus I have given you an account of the several appearances of our Saviour, not only to the apostles, but to others, and have endeavoured to explain the chief difficulties relating to them; so that here is a very plentiful testimony of our Saviour's appearance after his resurrection. I proceed to the

II. Thing here observable, that our Lord was really alive when he thus appeared, and his body vitally united to his soul: *To whom he also shewed himself alive.* To which purpose, there is a remarkable passage in Ignatius, in his epistle to the church of Smyrna, out of the same Hebrew Nazarene gospel; "That Christ said to Peter, "after his resurrection, Behold, touch me, and see "that I am not a spirit that have assumed a body." For that was one great objection, that his body was not a real body united to his soul, but a thin airy body, such as are assumed by spectres and apparitions. But the farther evidence of this I refer to the second general head, concerning the proofs of the reality of his appearance. I proceed to the

III. Thing I observed, *viz.* That he appeared alive after he had been really dead: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion*, says the text; that is, after he was crucified, and dead, and buried, he was raised and restored to life again. And this likewise is necessary, to evidence the truth and reality of his resurrection,

ſurrection, that he was really dead. That this was ſo, we cannot doubt, whether we conſider the malice of the Jews, who would take care he ſhould be dead before he was taken from the croſs; or the manner of his death, his heart being pierced by the ſpear, which was evident from the water and blood which came out of his ſide, which ſhewed that his heart was mortally wounded; or the time of his being in the grave, which was part of three days.

And now, if he was really dead, his reſtitution to life, which we call his reſurrection, muſt be miraculous; it being beyond any natural power, that we know of, to effect it.

As for that malicious tradition of the Jews, that he was ſtolen out of his grave by his diſciples, while the watch was aſleep, and given out to be riſen from the dead; beſides the undeniable proofs of his reſurrection, which I ſhall produce by and by, the evidence which theſe ſuborned witneſſes gave, of his diſciples ſtealing away his body, deſtroys itſelf; for they ſaid, *his diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away, while we ſlept;* which amounts to no more, but that when they awaked, his body was ſome way or other conveyed or gone out of the grave; which is conſiſtent with his reſurrection. But ſurely none will think fit to give credit to what they teſtify was done while they were aſleep. They are very willing to believe a thing, who will admit of ſuch a depoſition.

Thus much concerning our Saviour's appearance to his diſciples and followers, after his reſurrection. I ſhall briefly conſider, in the

Second place, why he only appeared to his own followers, and not alſo to the unbelieving Jews, who had put him to death, for the full conviction of his enemies and murderers, and the converſion of that whole nation to whom he was primarily ſent.

Of this matter, ſo far as is fit for us to inquire into the reaſon of the divine diſpenſations, this probable account may be given.

I. It was only of abſolute neceſſity, that thoſe who were to be the firſt publiſhers of the goſpel, and the witneſſes of his reſurrection to the world, ſhould have the

the utmoſt evidence and ſatisfaction concerning the reality of it: others might very ſoon credit it upon the teſtimony of ſo many witneſſes, who alſo gave evidence to the truth of their teſtimony, by the miracles which they wrought; and of their own ſincerity, by dying for this teſtimony. And thus St Peter takes notice of the reaſon why our Lord, after his reſurrection, did not appear to all the people, but only to ſelect witneſſes; becauſe his appearance was neceſſary only to thoſe who were deſigned and appointed to be the witneſſes of it. If more had been neceſſary, he muſt by the ſame reaſon have appeared to all the world, as well as to the Jews: Acts x. 40. 41. *Him God raiſed up the third day, and ſhewed him openly; not to all the people, but to witneſſes choſen before of God, even unto us, who did eat and drink with him, after he roſe from the dead; and he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to teſtify,* &c.

2. The unbelieving Jews, eſpecially the chief prieſts and rulers, upon whoſe authority the people depended, were very unworthy, to whom God ſhould afford ſo extraordinary a way of conviction, who had already deſpiſed and rejected ſo great evidence as was offered to them; and not only ſo, but maliciouſly imputed the plaineſt miracles that ever were wrought amongſt them, to the power and operation of the devil. Now, if any thing can render men incapable of the favour or farther means of conviction, ſuch a malicious reſiſtance of the evidence which our Saviour's miracles, daily wrought among them, carried along with them, would probably do it; eſpecially if we conſider, that the greateſt of all the miracles which he wrought in his lifetime, (I mean, the raiſing of Lazarus from the dead, after he had been dead four days), was ſo far from convincing them, though they could not deny the thing, that from thence their malice took occaſion to reſolve to put him to death: John xi. 47. *Then gathered the chief prieſts and Phariſees a council, and ſaid, What do we? for this man doth many miracles: if we let him alone, all men will believe on him.* And ver. 53. *Therefore from that day they took counſel together to put him to death.* Now, was it reaſonable that he ſhould appear to them for their conviction,

viction, after he was risen from the dead, who maliciously conspired to compass his death, for this very cause, because they knew that he had raised one from the dead?

3. This would have been inconsistent with that just punishment, which God hath determined to bring upon the Jewish nation for their obstinate infidelity, and malicious rejection, and cruel usage of the Son of God. After fitting means used for the conviction of men, it is just with God to let men remain in their own obstinate infidelity, and to punish them for it. And it is not to be expected, that God should use violent and irresistible means, to bring such persons to repentance, and to prevent their ruin. He pities the weakness and infirmities of honest minds, and condescends to give them such evidence as it is reasonable to demand, as he did to his disciples: but he hath not thought fit to provide so extraordinary a remedy for wilful and obstinate infidelity; which was the case of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Secondly, We will consider the proofs of the reality of our Saviour's appearance after his resurrection: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs*, ἐν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις, *by many certain and undoubted proofs or arguments*; for so the words properly signify, as Quintilian from Aristotle tells us; τεκμήρια, says he, are *indubitata et necessaria signa*, "undoubted "and necessary signs of a thing;" as the actions of speaking, walking, eating and drinking, are the τεκμήρια, *undoubted signs of life*.

And these τεκμήρια, or *undoubted proofs* of our Saviour's resurrection, may be referred to these two heads, the natural, and the supernatural and miraculous evidences of the thing.

1. The natural evidence of the thing to their senses; to their eyes, the quickest and surest of senses, men being least apt to be deceived in those things *quæ sunt oculis commissa fidelibus*, "which are committed to such faith-"ful witnesses, as our own eyes." He was seen of all his disciples, not once, but several times; not by a transient view and glance, but in a way of the most familiar conversation: he discoursed with them, and did eat and drink with them, and with the same circumstances that he

he used in his lifetime, he gave thanks, and brake bread with them: he suffered his body to be touched by them, that they might be convinced that it was a real body, consisting of flesh and bones: Luke xxiv. 39. *Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*

And to convince them beyond all doubt and scruple, that the very same body was raised in which he had suffered, he gives them leave to handle the wounds of his hands and feet: Luke xxiv. 39. *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.* John xx. 19. *He shewed them his hands and his side.* And to Thomas, who was more unbelieving than the rest, he says in the presence of them all, ver. 27. *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.* But besides this natural sensible evidence, he gave them likewise,

2. A supernatural and miraculous evidence. St John mentions two or three instances; his coming upon the sudden on them, and *standing in the midst of them, when the doors were shut.* Not that he passed through the door with his body, which is not a miracle, but a plain impossibility, and therefore just as fit to countenance transubstantiation, as one impossibility is to prove another: but that he did miraculously open the door, and come upon them so quickly, as was undiscernable to them; which every man will grant, not only to be possible, but easy to the divine power. But this way of our Saviour's conveying himself into the midst of his disciples, though it be also miraculous, yet the church of Rome will by no means allow it; it is too plain, and easy to be reconciled with the nature and possibility of things; they love at their hearts *a lying wonder*, a foppish miracle.

And this miracle was repeated twice, first, when Thomas was absent, John xx. 19. and when he was present, the same was done again, ver. 26.

And then the miraculous draught of fishes, by which also he had made himself known to them in his lifetime.

And then Peter's casting himself into the sea, when

he knew it was he, in confidence of that divine power which in the like kind he had experience of before.

These miracles St John mentions; but he tells us, chap. xx. 30. that *many other miracles Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which are not set down in that book.* The

Third thing in the text is, the duration and continuance of his appearing to them; *being seen of them forty days.* And this is of great moment to confirm the reality of the thing. A man may for once be imposed upon by an illusion of fancy in a thing which he vehemently desires and expects, and which runs strongly in his mind: but where there is time to examine things, and compare all circumstances together, and to look narrowly into them, and to try them by several senses, and at several times for so long a space, it is morally, nay almost naturally impossible, that any one man in their senses, much more so many hundreds of persons, should in such circumstances be grossly deluded in a plain sensible matter of fact.

Fourthly, and lastly, Here is the subject-matter of our Saviour's discourse with his disciples, *concerning things which pertain to the kingdom of God*; or as it is in the verse before, *after he had by the Holy Ghost (which was not given him by measure,* as the evangelist tells us elsewhere) *given commandment to his apostles, whom he had chosen:* that is, after he had given the full orders and instructions concerning the doctrine which they were to publish, and all other things pertaining to that spiritual kingdom, which he was setting up in the world: by the agreement of all which with what he had said to them in his lifetime, they were more and more confirmed, that it was the very same person whom they had conversed with before, for above three years together. And yet in this discourse concerning his kingdom, he reserved some things to be afterward revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, according as he had promised, *that when the Spirit of truth was come, he should teach them all things*; particularly concerning the spiritual nature of his kingdom, which they did not yet fully understand, as appears by that question which they put to him, ver. 6. *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore*

store the kingdom unto Israel? They still dreamed of a temporal kingdom, in which our Saviour would appear in great pomp and splendor, to subdue the world to them.

From all this discourse which I have made, you see what evidence the apostles, who were to be the first publishers of the gospel, and witnesses of Christ's resurrection, had of the truth and reality of it; so plentiful, and clear, and convincing, as nothing more could either be desired or expected. And we have a credible relation of these things brought down to us, abundantly sufficient to satisfy those who are free from the bias of passion or interest, or the prejudice and prepossession of a contrary religion, in which they have been educated and brought up; and sufficient to gain some few ingenuous and teachable persons here and there, who do more impartially consider things; and though they have been educated in a contrary religion, yet have preserved in themselves a greater freedom of judgment, than education does usually leave in the minds of men.

But yet this credible relation of actions and miracles done long ago, how true soever in itself, does not carry so present, and sensible, and strong a conviction with it, as to be able to bear down in the common people, the violent prejudice of education in a contrary religion, and consequently is not likely to do any great matter of itself toward the conversion of infidel nations.

And therefore the divine wisdom, which does nothing that is superfluous and unnecessary, thought fit not only to send the apostles armed with this evidence, which had abundantly convinced them, to testify the resurrection of Christ to the world, but also to give an immediate testimony to them, by enabling them to work present miracles upon the spot, for the confirmation of their testimony. And this divine power which went along with them, was a sensible testimony and conviction, both to the knowing and ignorant part of mankind, that they were teachers and witnesses sent by God; and therefore our Lord commands them, *not to depart from Jerusalem till they had received power from on high*, to

qualify them to be witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection, not only in Jeruſalem, and Judea, and Samaria, but to the utmoſt parts of the earth.

And this I ſtill believe to be the caſe of thoſe many nations of the world, that are yet under the violent, and almoſt invincible prejudice of education in another religion. That which may reaſonably ſatisfy us who are brought up in the Chriſtian religion, is not likely to be effectual enough to convince them; and therefore I think it ſtill very credible, that if perſons of ſincere minds did go to preach the pure Chriſtian religion, free from thoſe errors and ſuperſtitions which have crept into it, to infidel nations, that God would ſtill enable ſuch perſons to work miracles, without which there would be little or no probability of ſucceſs. For as the wiſdom of God is not wont to do that which is ſuperfluous, ſo neither to be wanting in that which is neceſſary; and though the morality of the Chriſtian religion be admirable, and very apt to recommend itſelf to the reaſon of mankind, yet the doctrine of the death of the Son of God would be ſuch a ſtumbling-block, as would be hard for them to get over; and the relation of ancient miracles would not eaſily be admitted, by thoſe who are utterly ſtrangers to our hiſtories of former times; and conſequently not ſo fit to judge of what credit and value they are.

It is not good to be confident where we are not certain; but this I piouſly believe, that God would extraordinarily countenance ſuch an attempt by all fitting aſſiſtance, as he did the firſt publication of the goſpel; becauſe the reaſon and neceſſity is plainly the ſame in this caſe, as it was at firſt. For if God did not think the apoſtles naked teſtimony, unleſs it were armed with miracles, ſufficient for the conviction of the world, concerning the reſurrection of Chriſt, of which themſelves had been eye-witneſſes, much leſs can we expect to gain credit, who only carry the relation of theſe ancient matters of fact, atteſted by hiſtories to which they are wholly ſtrangers.

And I do ſtrongly hope, that there ſtill remains a great harveſt among the Gentiles, yet to be gained to Chriſtianity before the end of the world; and that the

the providence of God will, in his own appointed time, make a farther ſtep in the converſion of the infidel nations; and that more of the kingdoms of the earth ſhall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Chriſt; and yet, that before the end of all things, the light of the goſpel ſhall be diſplayed in a glorious manner, not only in thoſe vaſt empires of Tartary, and China, and Japan, and Indoſtan, and other great kingdoms of the eaſt, but in the large and dark regions of the new-diſcovered world; for that ſolemn promiſe which God made to his Son, Pſal. ii. 8. *Aſk of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion,* ſeems to be very far from being yet fully accompliſhed; and ſince this is like to be the work of ſome ages, the time perhaps is not far off when it ſhall begin: and though I ſee no ſufficient grounds from ſcripture to believe the perſonal reign of Chriſt upon earth for a thouſand years; yet it ſeems to be not improbable, that ſome time before the end of the world, the glorious kingdom of Chriſt, I mean, the prevalency of the pure Chriſtian religion, ſhould be of as long continuance, as the reign of Mahomet and Antichriſt have been, both which have now laſted about a thouſand years.

For it is clear, that *the fulneſs of the Gentiles* is not yet *come in,* becauſe the Jews ſtill continue diſperſed over the world, which is the mark our Saviour hath given of the call and reſtitution of the Jews, Luke xxi. 24. *They ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led captive into all nations; and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled:* And thus St Paul explains to us this prediction of our Saviour, Rom. xi. 25. *I would not, brethren, that you ſhould be ignorant of this myſtery, that blindneſs in part is happened unto Iſrael, until the fulneſs of the Gentiles be come in.*

So that this we have reaſon to expect, and this let us pray for, *That the knowledge of the Lord may fill the earth, as the waters cover the ſea; that his ways may be known upon earth, and his ſaving health among all nations;* and with St Paul, *let our hearty deſire and prayer for Iſrael be, that they may be ſaved; that there may come*

out of Sion a deliverer, and he may turn away unrighteouſneſs from Jacob; eſpecially ſince St Paul hath given us reaſon to hope, that this would be of ſo great benefit and advantage to the Gentile world, Rom. xi. 12. *If the fall of the Jews be the riches of the world, and the diminution of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulneſs?* and ver. 15. *For if the caſting away of them be the reconciling of the world; what ſhall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?* Intimating, that as the rejection of the Jews was the occaſion of publiſhing the goſpel, that *doctrine of reconciliation*, to the world, as the ſame apoſtle doth elſewhere call it; ſo the receiving them to favour again ſhould be *life from the dead;* that is, a kind of reſurrection to the remainder of the Gentile word, who had ſo long *lain in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death. Which the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant*, grant in his due time may be accompliſhed; that thoſe *other ſheep, which are not yet of this fold, may hear his voice, and be brought in, that there may be one fold, and one ſhepherd; and all the ends of the earth may ſee the ſalvation of our God.*

SER-

SERMON CXCIV.

The possibility of the resurrection asserted and proved.

Preached at Whitehall, 1682.

ACTS xxvi. 8.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

THE resurrection of the dead is one of the great articles of the Christian faith; and yet so it hath happened, that this great article of our religion hath been made one of the chief objections against it. There is nothing that Christianity hath been more upbraided withal, both by the Heathens of old, and by the infidels of later times, than the impossibility of this article. So that it is a matter of great consideration and consequence, to vindicate our religion in this particular. For if the thing be evidently impossible, then it is highly unreasonable to propose it to the belief of mankind.

I know that some, more devout than wise, and who, it is to be hoped, mean better than they understand, make nothing of impossibilities in matters of faith, and would fain persuade us, that the more impossible any thing is, for that very reason it is the fitter to be believed; and that it is an argument of a poor and low faith, to believe only things that are possible; but a generous and heroical faith will swallow contradictions, with as much ease as reason assents to the plainest and most evident propositions. Tertullian, in the heat of his zeal and eloquence, upon this point of the death and resurrection of Christ, lets fall a very odd passage, and which

which must have many grains of allowance to make it tolerable: *Prorsus credibile est*, saith he, *quia ineptum est*; *certum est quia impossibile*: "It is therefore very "credible, because it is foolish; and certain, because "it is impossible:" And this, says he, is *necessarium dedecus fidei*, that is, "it is necessary the Christian faith "should be thus disgraced, by the belief of impossibili-"ties and contradictions." I suppose he means, that this article of the resurrection was not in itself the less credible, because the Heathen philosophers cavilled at it, as a thing impossible and contradictious, and endeavoured to disgrace the Christian religion, upon that account. For had he meant otherwise, that the thing was therefore credible, because it was really and in itself foolish and impossible; this had been to recommend the Christian religion, from the absurdity of the things to be believed; which would be a strange commendation of any religion to the sober and reasonable part of mankind.

I know not what some men may find in themselves; but I must freely acknowledge, that I could never yet attain to that bold and hardy degree of faith, as to believe any thing for this reason, because it was impossible: for this would be to believe a thing to be, because I am sure it cannot be. So that I am very far from being of his mind, that wanted not only more difficulties, but even impossibilities, in the Christian religion, to exercise his faith upon.

It is true indeed, Abraham, when he was offering up his son Isaac, is said *against hope to have believed in hope*: But he did not believe against a plain impossibility; for the Apostle to the Hebrews expressly tells us, that *he reasoned that God was able to raise him from the dead*. But had he believed this impossible, he could not have reconciled the command of God with his promise; the command *to sacrifice Isaac*, with the promise which he made before, that *in his seed*, which was Isaac, *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. So that though God was pleased to try his faith with a great difficulty, yet with no impossibility.

I premise all this, to satisfy men how necessary it is to vindicate the Christian religion from this objection,

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of the impossibility of any of its articles. And whatever Tertullian might say in a rhetorical rant, it is very plain, that the ancient fathers did not think the resurrection to be a thing impossible; for then they would never have attempted, as they very frequently do, to have answered the objections of the Heathens against it, from the pretended impossibility of it.

To be sure, St Paul did not think the resurrection of the dead a thing impossible; for then he would never have asked that question, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* nothing being so likely to be thought incredible, and upon so good reason, as that which is impossible.

Leaving therefore to the church of Rome that foolhardiness of faith, to believe things to be true, which at the same time their reason plainly tells them are impossible, I shall at this time endeavour to assert and vindicate this article of the resurrection, from the pretended impossibility of it. And I hope, by God's assistance, to make the possibility of the thing so plain, as to leave no considerable scruple about it, in any free and unprejudiced mind. And this I shall do from these words of St Paul, which are part of the defence which he made for himself before Festus and Agrippa; the substance whereof is this: That he had lived a blameless and inoffensive life among the Jews, in whose religion he had been bred up; that he was of the strictest sect of that religion, a Pharisee, which, in opposition to the Sadducees, maintained the resurrection of the dead, and a future state of rewards and punishments in another life: and that for the hope of this he was called in question, and accused by the Jews, ver. 6. 7. *And now I stand here, and am judged, for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers; unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come; for which hope sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.* That is, he was accused for preaching that Jesus was risen from the dead, which is a particular instance of the general doctrine of the resurrection, which was entertained by the greatest part of the Jews, and which to the natural reason of mankind (however the Heathen in opposition to the Christian religion were

were prejudiced against it) hath nothing in it that is incredible. And for this he appeals to his judges, Festus and Agrippa, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*

Which words being a question without an answer, imply in them these two propositions:

First, That it was thought by some a thing incredible, that the dead should be raised. This is supposed in the question, as the foundation of it: For he who asks why a thing is so, supposeth it to be so.

Secondly, That this apprehension, that it is a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead, is very unreasonable: For the question being left unanswered, implies its own answer, and is to be resolved into this affirmative, that there is no reason why they, or any man else, should think it a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead.

I shall speak to these two propositions, as briefly as I can; and then shew, what influence this doctrine of the resurrection ought to have upon our lives.

First, That it was thought by some a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead. This St Paul had reason to suppose, having from his own experience found men so averse from the entertaining of this doctrine. When he preached to the philosophers at Athens, and declared to them the resurrection of one Jesus from the dead; they were amazed at this new doctrine, and knew not what he meant by it, Acts xvii. 18. *They said, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.* He had discoursed to them of the resurrection of one Jesus from the dead; but this business of the resurrection was a thing so remote from their apprehensions, that they had no manner of conception of it; but understood him quite in another sense, as if he had declared to them two new deities, Jesus and Anastasis; as if he had brought a new god and a new goddess among them, Jesus and the resurrection. And when he discoursed to them again more fully of this matter, it is said, ver. 32. that *when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, they mocked.* And at the 24th verse of this 26th chapter, when he spake of the resurrection,

rection, Festus told him, he would hear him no farther, and that he looked upon him as a man *beside himself whom much learning had made mad.* Festus looked upon this business of the resurrection, as the wild speculation of a crazy head. And indeed the Heathens generally, even those who believed the immortality of the soul, and another state after this life, looked upon the resurrection of the body as a thing impossible. Pliny, I remember, reckons it among those things which are impossible, and which God himself cannot do, *revocare defunctos,* "to call back the dead "to life:" And in the primitive times, the Heathen philosophers very much derided the Christians, upon account of this strange doctrine of the resurrection, looking always upon this article of their faith, as a ridiculous and impossible assertion.

So easy is it for prejudice to blind the minds of men, and to represent every thing to them, which hath a great appearance of difficulty in it, as impossible. But I shall endeavour to shew, that if the matter be thoroughly examined, there is no ground for any such apprehension. I proceed therefore to the

Second proposition, namely, That this apprehension, that it is an incredible thing that God should raise the dead, is very unreasonable: *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* that is, there is no sufficient reason, why any man should look upon the resurrection of the dead, as a thing impossible to the power of God; the only reason why they thought it incredible, being because they judged it impossible: so that nothing can be vainer, than for men to pretend to believe the resurrection; and yet at the same time, to grant it to be a thing in reason impossible, because no man can believe that which he thinks to be incredible; and the impossibility of a thing is the best reason any man can have to think a thing incredible. So that the meaning of St Paul's question is, *Why should it be thought a thing impossible, that God should raise the dead?*

To come then to the business: I shall endeavour to shew, That there is no sufficient reason why men should look upon the resurrection of the dead, as a thing impossible

possible to God: *Why should it be thought a thing incredible*, that is, impossible, *with you, that God should raise the dead?* Which question implies in it these three things.

I. That it is above the power of nature, to raise the dead.

II. But it is not above the power of God, to raise the dead. And,

III. That God should be able to do this, is by no means incredible to natural reason.

I. This question implies, that it is above the power of nature, to raise the dead; and therefore the Apostle puts the question very cautiously, *Why should it be thought incredible, that God should raise the dead?* By which he seems to grant, that it is impossible to any natural power to raise the dead; which is granted on all hands.

II. But this question does plainly imply, that it is not above the power of God to do this. Though the raising of the dead to life be a thing above the power of nature, yet why should it be thought incredible, that God, who is the author of nature, should be able to do this? And indeed the Apostle's putting the question in this manner, takes way the main ground of this objection against the resurrection, from the impossibility of the thing. For the main reason why it was looked upon as impossible, was, because it was contrary to the course of nature, that there should be any return from a perfect privation to a habit, and that a body perfectly dead should be restored to life again: But for all this, no man that believes a God, who made the world, and this natural frame of things, but must think it very reasonable to believe, that he can do things far above the power of any thing that he hath made.

III. This question implies, that it is not a thing incredible to natural reason, that God should be able to raise the dead. I do not say, that by natural light we can discover that God will raise the dead; for that depending merely upon the will of God, can no otherwise be certainly known than by divine revelation: But that God can do this, is not at all incredible to natural reason. And this is sufficiently implied in the question which

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St Paul aſks, in which he applies to Feſtus and Agrippa, neither of them Chriſtians, *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God ſhould raiſe the dead?* and why ſhould he appeal to them concerning the credibility of this matter, if it be a thing incredible to natural reaſon?

That it is not, I ſhall firſt endeavour to prove, and then to anſwer the chief objections againſt the poſſibilty of it.

And I prove it thus: It is not incredible to natural reaſon, that God made the world, and all the creatures in it; that mankind is *his offspring*; and that *he gives us life and breath, and all things*. This was acknowledged and firmly believed by many of the Heathens. And indeed, whoever believes that the being of God may be known by natural light, muſt grant that it may be known by the natural light of reaſon, that God made the world; becauſe one of the chief arguments for the being of God, is taken from thoſe viſible effects of wiſdom, and power, and goodneſs which we ſee in the frame of the world. Now, he that can do the greater, can undoubtedly do the leſs: he that made all things of nothing, can much more raiſe a body out of the duſt; he who at firſt gave life to ſo many inanimate beings, can eaſily reſtore that which is dead to life again. It is an excellent ſaying of one of the Jewiſh Rabbies, "That "he who made that which was not, to be, can cer- "tainly make that which once was, to be again." This hath the force of a demonſtration; for no man that believes that God hath done the one, can make any doubt, but that he can, if he pleaſe, do the other.

This ſeems to be ſo very clear, that they muſt be ſtrong objections indeed, that can render it incredible.

There are but two that I know of, that are of any conſideration, and I ſhall not be afraid to repreſent them to you with their utmoſt advantage; and they are theſe.

Firſt, Againſt the reſurrection in general: It is pretended impoſſible, after the bodies of men are reſolved into duſt, to recollect all the diſperſed parts, and bring them together, to be united into one body.

The second is levelled against the resurrection in some particular instances, and pretends it to be impossible in some cases only, *viz.* when that which was the matter of one man's body does afterwards become the matter of another man's body: in which case, say they, it is impossible that both these should, at the resurrection, each have their own body.

The difficulty of both these objections is perfectly avoided by those who hold, that it is not necessary that our bodies at the resurrection should consist of the very same parts of matter that they did before; there being no such great difference between one parcel of dust and another; neither in respect of the power of God, which can as easily command this parcel of dust as that to become a living body, and being united to the soul, to rise up and walk: So that the miracle of the resurrection will be all one in the main, whether our bodies be made of the very same matter they were before, or not. Nor will there be any difference as to us; for whatever matter our bodies be made of, when they are once reunited to our souls, they will be then as much our own, as if they had been made of the very same matter of which they consisted before. Besides that the change which the resurrection will make in our bodies, will be so great, that we could not know them to be the same, though they were so.

Now, upon this supposition, which seems philosophical enough, the force of both these objections is wholly declined. But there is no need to fly to this refuge; and therefore I will take this article of the resurrection in the strictest sense, for the raising of a body to life, consisting of the same individual matter that it did before; and in this sense, I think, it hath generally been received by Christians, not without ground from scripture. I will only mention one text, which seems very strongly to imply it, Rev. xx. 13. *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to his works.* Now, why should the sea and the grave be said *to deliver up their dead,* if there were not a resurrection of the same body; but any dust formed into a living body, and united to the

the soul, would serve the turn? We will therefore take it for granted, that the very same body shall be raised. And I doubt not, even in this sense, to vindicate the possibility of the resurrection from both these objections.

First, Against the resurrection in general of the same body; it is pretended impossible, after the bodies of men are mouldered into the dust, and by infinite accidents have been scattered up and down the world, and have undergone a thousand changes, to recollect and rally together the very same parts of which they consisted before. This the Heathens used to object to the primitive Christians; for which reason they also used to burn the bodies of martyrs, and to scatter their ashes in the air, to be blown about by the wind, in derision of their hopes of a resurrection.

I know not how strong malice might make this objection to appear: but surely in reason it is very weak: For it wholly depends upon a gross mistake of the nature of God and his providence, as if it did not extend to the smallest things; as if God did not know all things that he hath made, and had them not always in his view, and perfectly under his command; and as if it were a trouble and burden to infinite knowledge and power, to understand and order the least things; whereas infinite knowledge and power can know and manage all things, with as much ease, as we can understand and order any one thing.

So that this objection is grounded upon a low and false apprehension of the divine nature, and is only fit for Epicurus's herd, who fancied to themselves a sort of slothful and unthinking deities, whose happiness consisted in their lazines, and a privilege to do nothing. I proceed therefore to the

Second objection, which is more close and pressing; and this is levelled against the resurrection in some particular instances. I will mention but two, by which all the rest may be measured and answered.

One is, of those who are drowned in the sea, and their bodies eaten up by fishes, and turned into their nourishment; and those fishes perhaps eaten afterwards

by men, and converted into the substance of their bodies.

The other is of the cannibals; some of whom, as credible relations tell us, have lived wholly, or chiefly of the flesh of men; and consequently the whole, or the greatest part of the substance of their bodies, is made of the bodies of other men. In these and the like cases, wherein one man's body is supposed to be turned into the substance of another man's body, how should both these, at the resurrection, each recover his own body? So that this objection is like that of the Sadducees to our Saviour, concerning a woman that had seven husbands, they ask, *Whose wife of the seven shall she be at the resurrection?* So here when several have had the same body, whose shall it be at the resurrection? and how shall they be supplied that have it not?

This is the objection; and in order to the answering of it, I shall premise these two things.

I. That the body of man is not a constant and permanent thing, always continuing in the same state, and consisting of the same matter; but a successive thing, which is continually spending, and continually renewing itself, every day losing something of the matter which it had before, and gaining new; so that most men have new bodies, oftener than they have new cloaths; only with this difference, that we change our cloaths commonly at once, but our bodies by degrees.

And this is undeniably certain from experience. For so much as our bodies grow, so much new matter is added to them, over and besides the repairing of what is continually spent; and after a man is come to his full growth, so much of his food as every day turns into nourishment, so much of his yesterday's body is usually wasted, and carried off by insensible perspiration, that is, breathed out at the pores of his body; which, according to the static experiment of Sanctorius a learned physician, who for several years together weighed himself exactly every day, is, as I remember, according to the proportion of five to eight, of all that a man eats and drinks. Now, according to this proportion,

tion, every man must change his body several times in a year.

It is true indeed, the more solid parts of the body, as the bones, do not change so often as the fluid and fleshy; but that they also do change, is certain, because they grow, and whatever grows is nourished and spends, because otherwise it would not need to be repaired.

II. The body which a man hath at any time of his life, is as much his own body as that which he hath at his death; so that if the very matter of his body, which a man had any time of his life, be raised, it is as much his own and the same body, as that which he had at his death, and commonly much more perfect; because they who die of lingering sickness, or old age, are usually mere skeletons when they die; so that there is no reason to suppose, that the very matter of which our bodies consist at the time of our death, shall be that which shall be raised; that being commonly the worst, and most imperfect body of all the rest.

These two things being premised, the answer to this objection cannot be difficult. For as to the more solid and firm parts of the body, as the scull and bones, it is not, I think, pretended that the cannibals eat them; and if they did, so much of the matter, even of these solid parts, wastes away in a few years, as being collected together would supply them many times over. And as for the fleshy and fluid parts, these are so very often changed and renewed, that we can allow the cannibals to eat them all up, and to turn them all into nourishment, and yet no man need contend for want of a body of his own at the resurrection, *viz.* any of those bodies which he had ten or twenty years before; which are every whit as good, and as much his own, as that which was eaten.

You will pardon me, I hope, that I have dwelt so long upon so contentious an argument, when you consider how necessary what I have said is to the vindicating of so great an article of our religion; and especially in this evil age of unbelief, when greater matters than this are called in question.

Having thus shewn that the resurrection is not a thing incredible to natural reason, I should now pro-

ceed to shew the certainty of it from divine revelation. For as reason tells us, it is not impossible; so the word of God hath assured us, that it is certain. The texts of scripture are so many and clear to this purpose, and so well known to all Christians, that I will produce none. I shall only tell you, that as it is expressly revealed in the gospel, so our blessed Saviour, for the confirmation of our faith and the comfort and encouragement of our hope, hath given us the experiment of it in his own resurrection, which is *the earnest and first-fruits of ours*. So St. Paul tells us, that *Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept*. And that Christ did really rise from the dead, we have as good evidence, as for any ancient matter of fact which we do most firmly believe; and more and greater evidence than this, the thing is not capable of; and because it is not, no reasonable man ought to require it.

Now, what remains, but to conclude this discourse with these practical inferences which our apostle makes from this doctrine of the resurrection? and I shall mention these two:

The *first*, for our support and comfort under the infirmities and miseries of this mortal life.

The *second*, for the encouragement of obedience and a good life.

I. For our comfort and support under the infirmities and miseries of this mortal state. The consideration of the glorious change of our bodies at the resurrection of the just, cannot but be a great comfort to us, under all bodily pain and sufferings.

One of the greatest burdens of human nature, is the frailty and infirmity of our bodies, the necessities they are frequently pressed withal, the manifold diseases they are liable to, and the dangers and terrors of death, to which they are continually subject and enslaved. But the time is coming, if we be careful to prepare ourselves for it, when we shall be clothed with other kind of bodies, free from all these miseries and inconveniencies which flesh and blood is subject to. *For these vile bodies shall be changed and fashioned like to the glorious body of the Son of God.* When our bodies shall be raised

raised to a new life, they shall become incorruptible. *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; and then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* When this last enemy is conquered, there shall be no *fleshly lusts*, nor brutish passions, *to fight against the soul; no law in our members, to war against the law of our minds*; no disease to torment us, no danger of death to amaze and terrify us. Then all the passions and appetites of our outward man shall be subject to the reason of our minds, and our bodies shall partake of the immortality of our souls. It is but a very little while, that our spirits shall be crushed, and clogged with these heavy and sluggish bodies: At the resurrection they shall be refined from all dregs of corruption, and become spiritual, and incorruptible, and glorious, and every way suited to the activity and perfection of a glorified soul, and *the spirits of just men made perfect.*

II. For the encouragement of obedience and a good life. Let the belief of this great article of our faith have the same influence upon us, which St Paul tells it had upon him, Acts xxiv. 15. 16. *I have hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and herein do I exercise myself, always to have a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards men.* The firm belief of a resurrection to another life, should make every one of us very careful how we demean ourselves in this life, and afraid to do any thing, or to neglect any thing, that may defeat our hopes of a blessed immortality, and expose us to the extreme and endless misery of body and soul in another life.

Particularly, it should be an argument to us, *to glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits*; and to use *the members* of the one, and *the faculties* of the other, as *instruments of righteousness unto holiness*. We should reverence ourselves, and take heed, not only how we defile our souls by sinful passions, but how we dishonour our bodies by sensual and brutish lusts; since God hath designed so great an honour and happiness for both at the resurrection.

So

So often as we think of a blessed resurrection to eternal life, and the happy consequences of it; the thoughts of so glorious a reward should make us diligent and unwearied in the service of so good a master, and so great a prince who can and will prefer us to infinitely greater honours, than any that are to be had in this world. This inference the Apostle makes from the doctrine of the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Nay, we may begin this blessed state while we are upon earth, by *setting our hearts and affections upon the things that are above,* and *having our conversations in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.*

Now, the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us always that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SER-

SERMON CXCV.

The resurrection of our Saviour considered, as an argument for seeking things above.

COL. iii. 1. 2.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above; not on things on the earth.

THE Apostle in this epistle (as his manner is in all the rest) having laid the doctrine of the gospel for a foundation, and endeavoured to rectify some errors, both in doctrine and practice, which the Christians at Colosse were seduced into, by the guile and arts of false teachers and apostles, as particularly *the worship of angels*, and, out of a pretence of humility, addressing themselves to God by their mediation, which is the particular scope and design of this epistle: the Apostle, I say, having, in the former part of it, endeavoured to set them right in this matter, and to establish their minds in the faith and doctrine of Christ; in the latter part of it, exhorts them to a conversation answerable to the doctrine of Christ, to a holy and heavenly life at the beginning of this third chapter; *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above; not on things on the earth.*

This inference is drawn from what he had said at a good distance before, namely, at the 12th verse of the former chapter, *Being buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Being buried with him in baptism.* For the full understanding

ing of this expression, we must have recourse to that parallel text, Rom. vi. 3. 4. 5. which will explain to us the meaning of this phrase. *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.* Where we see, that *to be baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ*, is to be baptized into the similitude and likeness of them; and the resemblance is this; that as Christ being dead was buried in the grave, and after some stay in it, that is, for three days, he was raised again out of it, by the glorious power of God, to a new and heavenly life, being not long after taken up into heaven to live at the right hand of God; so Christians, when they were baptized, were immersed into the water three times, their bodies being covered all over with it; which is therefore called, our being *buried with him by baptism into death*; and after some short stay under water, were raised or taken up again out of it, as if they had been *recovered to a new life*; by all which was spiritually signified, our dying to sin, and being raised to a divine and heavenly life, *through the faith of the operation of God*; that is, by that divine and supernatural power, which raised up Christ from the dead. So that Christians from thenceforth were *to reckon themselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ*, as the Apostle speaks, Rom. vi. 11.

Now, upon this ground, that we are *buried with Christ in baptism, and risen with him to a new and heavenly life*, the Apostle founds the exhortation in the text, *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.* So that the words are an earnest exhortation to a divine life, and a spiritual and heavenly conversation. In which there are two things to be considered.

First, The duty we are exhorted to, which is heavenly-

venly-mindedness: *Seek the things which are above*; and, *Set your affections on things above.*

Secondly, The arguments by which the Apostle urgeth and presseth this exhortation: *If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above*; and, *Seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.* So that my work will be,

First, To shew the nature of the duty to which we are exhorted. And,

Secondly, The force of the arguments, which are used to persuade us to it.

First, For the nature of the duty to which we are exhorted; and it is expressed both affirmatively and negatively.

1. Affirmatively; and the Apostle useth two several expressions: *Seek the things which are above*; and, *Set your affections on things above.*

2. Negatively; *and not on things on the earth.* And this seems to be added, not only to explain and ascertain the object, and to add vehemence and earnestness to the exhortation; but likewise to set off the excellency of the object, by way of opposition and comparison. *On the things that are above*; *and not upon those* pitiful and inferior *things, which are upon the earth.* And likewise to shew the inconsistency of these, and the impossibility of seeking and setting our affections upon both in an intense degree. For that would be to have two chief ends, *to love God and mammon; to serve two masters*, which our Saviour hath told us is impossible. But this I shall use afterwards, as an argument to enforce the exhortation.

To explain the nature of this duty, I shall consider the act, and the object.

I. For the act, here are two words used to express it, ζητεῖτε and φρονεῖτε, *seek, and set your affections;* and in these two words, these four things seem to be comprehended; an act of our understandings about these things; the ardency of our affections; and the activity of our endeavours in the pursuit of them; and a clear preference of the things which are above, to the things of the earth, when they come in competition. For these two words do comprehend, not only the power of our understandings,

understandings, and wills, and affections, and an earnest attention and application of mind to these things; but the activity of our endeavours about them.

1. Here is implied an act of our understandings, that we should mind and think upon these things, that we should often consider them, and meditate upon them; that heaven should be much in our thoughts, and the glory and excellency of that state, which we hope to attain to, and by what ways and means we may come to be made partakers of that blessed inheritance.

2. It implies likewise an act of our affections; that we heartily love and desire the things that are above, with that ardency and vehemency of affection, which is proportionable to the worth and excellency of them. And both these are included in the word φρονεῖτε, which is sometimes translated to *mind*, sometimes *to set our affections upon a thing*.

3. Activity and industry in the prosecution of these things, if by any means we may attain them. And this is implied in the word ζητεῖτε, *seek the things which are above*. When we know there are such treasures in heaven, so great a reward laid up for good men, *joys so unspeakable and full of glory*, and when our understandings have dwelt so long upon these things, as to work upon our affections, these, like so many springs of motion, will set our endeavours on work, for the obtaining of what we so much love and desire, and will make us inquisitive, with the young man in the gospel, *What good thing we shall do, that we may inherit eternal life*; by what means we may best secure our title to heaven and happiness; and very industrious to acquire those qualities and dispositions, which will fit us for heaven, and the blessed sight and enjoyment of God; nay, by which we may begin this happy state here, by our conversation in heaven, whilst we are sojourning here below, as *pilgrims and strangers on the earth*.

4. It implies a clear preference of the things above, to the things of the earth, when they come in competition. And in this sense the word φρονεῖν is observed to be used in good authors, for taking part with and adhering to one side, when two parties or interests come in competition. And indeed this phrase and form of speech,

ſpeech, when the thing is expreſſed affirmatively and negatively, is very often uſed by way of compariſon, when two things come in competition. *Lay not up for yourſelves treaſures upon earth: but lay up for yourſelves treaſures in heaven. Labour not for the meat that periſheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life.* So here; *Set your affections on thing above, not on things on the earth.* When heaven and earth come in competition, the happineſs of the next life, and the enjoyments of this, the intereſt of your ſouls, and of your bodies, *the things which are not ſeen, and are eternal, and the things which are ſeen, and are but temporal,* a holy, and heavenly, and virtuous life, and a ſenſual and ſinful courſe, *chuſe the better part,* ſtick to that which is the true and laſting intereſt; prefer heaven before earth, and the care of your ſouls, to that of your bodies, things eternal, to things temporal, and a holy and virtuous life which leads to heaven, to thoſe ſinful and vitious practices which will ſink men into perdition. For that this alſo the Apoſtle means by *things on the earth,* ſinful luſts and practices, ſeems very probable, from what follows at ver. 5. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.*

II. Let us conſider the object of this act, what it is that we are to ſeek and ſet our affections upon; and that is *the things which are above.*

1. The glorious God and Father of all, and his bleſſed and eternal Son our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Holy Spirit of God; theſe are the great objects of our contemplation and adoration. And then the holy angels, and *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect,* who are examples to us of doing the will of God here on earth, as it is done by them in heaven.

2. The bleſſed ſtate and condition which we aſpire after in the next life, with all the joys and glories of it, *ſuch as the eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.*

3. The diſpoſitions to be acquired, and the actions and duties to be performed by us, as neceſſary qualifications and means for the obtaining of this happineſs, and bringing us to the poſſeſſion of it; all theſe are

comprehended in the latitude of the object, *the things which are above.*

And *to seek*, and *mind, and set our affections* upon these, is to do those things which the consideration of each of these respectively calls for; so to meditate on God and mind him, as to fear, and love, and serve him; to seek his glory as our last end, and the enjoyment of him as our chief good; to seek his favour above all things, and to sue to him as the fountain of all grace, and *the giver of every good and perfect gift*, and of all blessings temporal, spiritual, and eternal, by the powerful intercession of his Son, the great and only Mediator between God and man, to be obtained for us, and to be wrought in us, by the powerful virtue and operation of the Holy Spirit: so to mind the angels and blessed saints above, as to aspire after their society, by imitating their virtues, and *being followers of those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises:* so to meditate on our future blessedness, as to raise our hearts and affections above this world, and effectually to engage us to fit ourselves for that blessed state and condition, that we may be *meet to be made partakers of that glorious inheritance:* and, lastly, so to mind all the duties and means necessary and conducing to our salvation, as effectually to perform them; to order our lives, and all the actions of them, with a regard to eternity; in a word, to omit and neglect nothing that may further and promote the great design of our eternal salvation, and to do nothing that may contradict or hinder it. This is *to seek and set our affections upon the things that are above.* And thus I have done with the first thing I propounded, the nature of the duty which we are exhorted to. I proceed to the

Second thing I propounded, which was to consider the force of the arguments which are used to persuade us to it. Here are three arguments in the text to this purpose; two of them are express, and the third of them implied.

I. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above.*

II. *Seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.*

III. The

III. The tranſcendent and incomparable excellency of the things above, in compariſon of earthly things. This is intimated in the oppoſition: *Set your affections on the things which are above; and not on things on the earth.* I ſhall briefly ſhew the force of each of theſe arguments.

I. *If ye then be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek the things which are above:* that is, if ye believe his reſurrection, if ye will be conformed to him in it, if ye be made partakers of the power and virtue of it.

1. If ye believe the reſurrection of Chriſt. The reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was the great ſeal of his miniſtry, and confirmation of his doctrine: and one great branch of his doctrine was heavenly-mindedneſs, that we ſhould *lay up for ourſelves treaſures in heaven, becauſe where our treaſure is, there will our hearts be alſo*; that we ſhould *firſt ſeek the kingdom of God, and the righteouſneſs thereof.*

2. If we will bear a conformity and reſemblance to him in his reſurrection. He is our great pattern and example, which the goſpel propounds to us; and that we may have the nearer conformity to him, the Apoſtle doth not only propoſe the virtues of his life to our imitation, but where we cannot literally imitate him, the Apoſtle urgeth ſpiritual conformity; that thoſe things which he did and ſuffered in his body, we ſhould do and ſuffer ſpiritually; as Chriſt *died for ſin*, ſo we ſhould *die to ſin*; as he literally *roſe again from the dead*, ſo, in conformity to him, we ſhould be ſpiritually *raiſed to newneſs of life.* As he *aſcended into heaven*, ſo we ſhould *aſcend thither* alſo *in our hearts and affections.* Col. ii. 12. *Buried with him in baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are riſen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raiſed him from the dead.* Rom. vi. 4. 5. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm into death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death, we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection.* To be raiſed from the dead, is in order to a new life. So the Apoſtle tells us, ver. 9. 10. 11. *Knowing that Chriſt being raiſed from the dead,*

dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. As the resurrection of Christ was in order to a better and happier life, to his ascension into heaven, and his living with God; so, in conformity to Christ, our spiritual resurrection should be in order to a heavenly and divine life. And what is the meaning of all this, but that men are apt to imitate those whom they love, and do affect to resemble them as much as they can? And therefore to endear our duty to us, the mortification of our lusts, and a holy life, the Apostle tells us, that hereby we bear a conformity to Christ, the great object of our love and imitation.

3. If ye be made partakers of the power and virtue of his resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is not only a pattern, but hath a power and efficacy in it, to raise us to a spiritual and heavenly life. When Christ rose, he did not rise alone, but many of the bodies of the saints who were dead rose with him, to signify to us the power of his resurrection. It communicated a virtue to those who had an interest in the merits of his death and sufferings, whereby they are enabled to live a new and heavenly life. John xi. 25. *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* Eph. i. 19. *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.* Phil. iii. 10. 11. *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* Col. ii. 13. *And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him.* Now, this power is derived to us by *believing on him, who raised up Jesus from the dead, that he is also able to raise us,* who are *dead in trespasses and sins, to a divine and heavenly life.* The

IId Argument is contained in these words, *Seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand*

hand of God. Which words do declare to us the exaltation of Christ's human nature, and his being advanced to be the King and Governor of his church, having all power and judgment committed to him. Luke xxiv. 26. Christ's ascension, and his sitting at the right hand of God, is called, *his entering into his glory. Ought he not to have suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory?* that is, to be invested with all power and authority for the good of the church. But most particularly the Apostle describes this, Eph. i. 20. 21. 22. *And set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church.*

And now the force of this argument is from the relation that is between the head and the members, between Christ and Christians. The members have an affection for the head, which makes them aspire heavenwards; and the head hath an influence upon the members. *If I be lifted up from the earth,* says our Lord, *I will draw all men unto me.* This is spoken of his crucifixion, *signifying what death he should die,* as the text tells us, John xii. 32. 33. But it is proportionably true of his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God; for there is a power and virtue in the resurrection of Christ, and in his ascension into heaven, as well as in his death, to draw all men to him. The gift of God's Holy Spirit is the fruit of his ascension, and exaltation *at the right hand of the Majesty on high:* And it is by the powerful operation of the Spirit of God upon our hearts, that we are raised to newness of life, and our affections fixed upon heavenly things. We are naturally bowed down to the earth, and inclined to the things of this world, *curvæ in terris animæ et cœlestium inanes*; but our glorified Saviour sitting at the right hand of God, by the power of his Spirit, draws our affections to him. The

IIId and last argument, which is but implied in the text, is the transcendent and incomparable excellency of heavenly things, above things on the earth, which

the Apostle intimates by the opposition, *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth;* earthly things are perishing and transitory, gross and unsatisfactory, and cannot be the felicity of an immortal soul, being neither suited to the spiritual nature, nor to the immortal duration of our souls; they can neither satisfy us while we live, nor preserve us from death, nor comfort us in it, nor accompany us into the other world, nor contribute any thing to our happiness there; and if they can do nothing towards our happiness, why should we set our hearts upon them? They that seek for happiness in earthly things, are like the women sitting over our Saviour's sepulchre, with their faces bowed down to the earth; they *seek the living among the dead:* Our happiness *is not here, it is risen,* it is above. Let our hearts ascend thither, where our happiness and our treasure is. Why should we bestow our affections upon these low and mean things, when there are incomparably better objects to fix them upon?

The inference from all this shall be to engage and persuade us by all these arguments and considerations, *to seek and mind the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; and to have our conversation there, where our Saviour is, and from whence also we look for him again, to change these vile bodies, that they may be made like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* Let all our actions have relation to another world, and our conversation declare that we are *mindful of another country, that is, a heavenly.* Is Christ our head risen, and ascended into heaven? Let us in our hearts and affections follow him thither, and patiently wait till he receive our souls, and raise our bodies, and take us wholly to himself, that we may be *for ever with the Lord.*

The resurrection of Christ is a demonstration of a future state after this life, and a pledge of a blessed immortality in another world. For our Lord, by his resurrection from the dead, hath conquered death, and *abolished it, and brought life and immortality to light.* He is *the first-fruits of them that slept,* and his resurrection is an earnest and assurance of ours; and from thence

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the Apoſtle makes this inference, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as ye know that your labour not ſhall be in vain in the Lord.* The belief of a future ſtate after this life ſhould put us upon the moſt earneſt and vigorous endeavours to ſecure this happy condition to ourſelves; *if by any means*, as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, *we may attain the reſurrection of the dead.* It ſhould raiſe us above the world and the luſts of it, above all the terrors and temptations of it

As, on the one hand, the ſerious thoughts of our mortality ſhould check our eager purſuit of this world; ſo, on the other hand, the belief of a life to come ſhould quicken our endeavours for the obtaining of it: Seeing we hope for ſo happy a ſtate, we ſhould prepare ourſelves for it by purity, and holineſs of heart and life, by perſeverance, and *a patient continuance in well-doing. What manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs*, who have ſuch hopes and expectations? *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.* Now that *life and immortality are brought to light by the goſpel*, what greater, what other deſign can any man propoſe to himſelf, than to be happy for ever? For ſuch a prize, who would not ſtrive, and run, and take any pains? Who would not deny himſelf *the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon*, reſiſt temptations and conflict with difficulties, and *glory in tribulations* and ſufferings, and be conſtant and *faithful to the death, in hope of that eternal life, which God that cannot lie, hath promiſed?*

In our purſuit of the things of this world, we uſually prevent enjoyment, by expectation; we anticipate our own happineſs, and eat out the heart and ſweetneſs of worldly pleaſures, by delightful forethoughts of them; ſo that when we come to poſſeſs them, they do not anſwer the expectation, nor ſatisfy the deſires which were raiſed about them, and they vaniſh into nothing: But the things which are above are ſo great, ſo ſolid, ſo durable, ſo glorious, that we cannot raiſe our thoughts to an equal height with them; we cannot enlarge our deſires beyond a poſſibility of ſatisfaction. Our hearts are greater than the world; but God is greater than our hearts;

hearts; and the happiness which he hath laid up for us, is like himself, incomprehensibly great and glorious Let the thoughts of this raise us above this world, and inspire us with greater thoughts and designs, than the care and concernments of this present life.

We all profess most firmly to believe, that after a few days we shall leave this world, and all the enjoyments of it, and go to the place from whence we shall not return; that we shall enter upon an unchangeable state of happiness or misery, according as we have demeaned ourselves in this present life; that great care and diligence is necessary to *work out our own salvation*; that there must be a great preparation of ourselves, by unspotted purity of heart and life, to make ourselves *meet for an inheritance with them that are sanctified*; that we must labour, and strive, and run, and fight, *and give all diligence to make our calling and election sure*; that we had need to *watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape the judgment of the great day, and to stand before the Son of man.* Such thoughts as these should continually possess our souls, and heaven should be always in our eye, as if, with St Stephen, *we saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*, to see how we behave ourselves here below; and when *we have fought a good fight, and finished our course, and kept the faith, to receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also.*

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for evermore. Amen.

SER-

SERMON CXCVI.

The circumstances and benefits of our Saviour's ascension.

Preached May 29. being ascension-day.

ACTS i. 9. 10. 11.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.

THere are two occasions of this day accidentally met together, which bear some resemblance to one another; the ascension of our blessed Saviour into heaven, and his exaltation in his kingdom, being *crowned with glory and honour, and set on the right hand of the Majesty on high*; and the restoration of our sovereign to his just rights, and royal state and dignity here upon earth, by a miraculous providence of God, and, as it were, by a kind of resurrection from the dead.

The first of these, being of a more spiritual and excellent nature, shall be the subject of my present discourse, not forgetting the other in the application of it.

The great foundation of our religion is the history of our Saviour, of his incarnation, and miracles, and life, of his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, and intercession for us at the right hand of God; and the doctrines and articles concerning these make up the main body of the Christian faith; and therefore nothing can be more useful than the explication

cation of theſe, and a ſerious conſideration and meditation upon them.

In theſe words you have an account of our Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven; concerning which we will conſider theſe three things:

Firſt, The circumſtances foregoing his aſcenſion.

Secondly, The circumſtances of his aſcenſion.

Thirdly, The conſequent benefits and advantages of it.

Firſt, The circumſtances foregoing his aſcenſion: *And when he had ſpoken theſe things, he was taken up.* This refers to the diſcourſe which our Saviour had with his apoſtles, immediately before he was taken up from them into heaven, of which we have an account in the verſes before the text. Ver. 4. being aſſembled with them, and juſt ready to take his leave of them, he commands them *that they ſhould not depart from Jeruſalem, but wait for the promiſe of the Father, which they had heard of him:* that is, they ſhould not diſperſe themſelves, till the Holy Ghoſt, which he had promiſed to ſend from his Father, was come upon them, in thoſe miraculous gifts and powers, whereby they ſhould be qualified for the preaching of the goſpel to the world.

And when our Saviour had given them this charge, they put a queſtion to him, concerning a thing which, notwithſtanding he had ſo plainly declared to them, that *his kingdom was not of this world*, did ſtill run in their minds, about the temporal reign of the Meſſias, and a glorious kingdom by him to be ſet up among the Jews: ver. 6. *They aſked of him, ſaying, Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore the kingdom unto Iſrael?* To this our Saviour gives them no direct anſwer, neither that he would, nor that he would not do what they expected; but gently reprehends their curioſity; ver. 7. *It is not for you to know the times and ſeaſons, which the Father hath put into his own power.* And inſtead of ſatisfying them in things that did not concern them, he diſcourſeth to them about thoſe things which did concern them; namely, how they ſhould be qualified and ſent forth to preach the goſpel to the world; ver. 8. *But ye ſhall receive power, after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you; and ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me, both in Jeruſalem,*

Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the utmoſt parts of the earth. And when he had ſpoken theſe things, he was taken up. Theſe are the circumſtances preceding his aſcenſion.

Secondly, We will conſider the circumſtances of his aſcenſion, and they are theſe four:

I. That our Saviour was taken up, while he was bleſſing his diſciples: Luke xxiv. 51. *And it came to paſs, while he bleſſed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*

II. That he was taken up in the view of his diſciples, and while their eyes were attentively fixed upon him: *While they beheld, he was taken up,* ver. 9.; and ver. 10. it is ſaid, *They looked ſtedfaſtly towards heaven, as he went up.*

III. That he was taken up in a cloud: *And a cloud received him out of their ſight.*

IV. The place whither he went: ver. 11. *The ſame Jeſus which is taken up from you into heaven;* which is elſewhere more particularly expreſſed by declaring the dignity to which he was exalted in heaven, *being ſet down on the right hand of God, and having all power in heaven and in earth committed to him.* Theſe are the chief circumſtances of his aſcenſion, which I ſhall ſpeak briefly to.

I. That our bleſſed Saviour was taken up while he was bleſſing his diſciples. This St Luke does not mention here in the hiſtory of the Acts, having mentioned it before in his goſpel, to which he refers us; Luke xxiv. 50. 51. ſpeaking of our Saviour and his apoſtles: *And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lift up his hands, and bleſſed them.* Lifting up of the hands was a ceremony uſed among the Jews, in bleſſing the people. Levit. ix. 22. it is ſaid there, that *Aaron lift up his hands towards the people, and bleſſed them.* So our Saviour here, in imitation of the uſual ceremonies among the Jews: *And it came to paſs, while he bleſſed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.* The firſt tidings of our Saviour's birth were attended with praiſes to God, and bleſſings to men: *Glory to God on high, peace on earth, and good-will towards men.* And when he died, he breathed out his

his soul in blessings to his enemies; in the height of his sufferings he was full of hearty prayers, and good wishes for those who were the cause of them: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And after his resurrection from the dead, just as he left the world, he was taken out of it, and translated into heaven, with a blessing in his mouth: *While he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.* And indeed his whole life, all that he did, and all that he suffered, his coming into the world, and his going out of it, was all a blessing to mankind: *God sent him to bless us, in turning us away every one from his iniquity.* He was always wishing well to us, and doing well for us: *He went about doing good.*

A blessed pattern to us, *leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps:* A lovely and desireable example; in imitation whereof, we should endeavour that our whole life may be a blessing and benefit to mankind; and that when we leave the world, we may be found so doing as our Lord did, doing the work of heaven while we are going thither.

II. He was taken up in the view of his disciples, and while their eyes were attentively fixed upon him: *While they beheld, he was taken up,* ver. 9.; and ver. 10. it is said, *They looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up.* After the apostles were fully convinced, by several appearances of our Saviour to them, and familiar conversation with them, that he was indeed risen from the dead; that they might be fully satisfied that *he came from God, and went to him,* he was in their sight, while he was speaking to them, taken up into heaven. And this is no small confirmation of the truth of our religion, that our Saviour did not only work the greatest miracles while he was alive, and after death rose again, and conversed among men; but was visibly taken up into heaven. So that if all things be duly considered, never did any man give so many evidences of his being sent from God, as our blessed Saviour did. He delivered the truth of God with a divine authority; and did the works of God with all imaginable evidence of a divine power; and with a divine patience submitted to the will of God, enduring the greatest sufferings; and by

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the mighty power of God was raised from the dead; and in a visible manner, by the same divine power, taken up into heaven.

III. He was taken up in a cloud: *He was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.* Which circumstance, tho' it do not seem very material; yet does it fitly represent to us the difference between the two dispensations of the law, and of the gospel. Elias was carried up *by a whirlwind* into heaven, in a *fiery chariot, with horses of fire:* but our Saviour *in a cloud;* to signify to us the coolness and calmness of the gospel-dispensation, in comparison of that of the law; which difference our Saviour had before observed to his disciples, upon a remarkable occasion, Luke ix. 54, 55. When they would have *called for fire from heaven* to have consumed the Samaritans for refusing to entertain our Saviour, as Elias had done in a like case, our Saviour severely reproves that fierce spirit of theirs, as by no means suitable to the gospel: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: For the Son of Man came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them.* And just answerable to the difference between the spirit of Elias and our Saviour, was the different manner of their translation into heaven; the one gently received up *in a cloud:* the other violently taken up *by a whirlwind,* carried in *a chariot of fire* drawn by *horses of fire.*

And there is likewise another difference not altogether unworthy of our observation. The blessing which Elijah left to Elisha at his parting from him, and the promise of his spirit to be imparted to him, is conceived in very doubtful words; 2 Kings ii. 9. *Elijah said to Elisha, ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if thou see me not, it shall not be so.* This was very doubtful, suitable to the obscurity of the law: But our Saviour, when he parted from his disciples, makes a plain and absolute promise of the Holy Ghost to them, answerable to the clearness and grace of the gospel: *Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.* So wisely did

God order all circumstances concerning our Saviour, that every thing belonging to him, every action that he did, and every circumstance of it, might have some important signification.

IV. The last circumstance of our Saviour's ascension, is the place where he went, ver. 11. *This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven.* And this is elsewhere more particularly expressed, by declaring the dignity to which he was exalted in heaven; *Being set down on the right hand of God, and having all power in heaven and earth committed to him.* Mark xvi. 19. *He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God:* Which phrase signifies our Saviour's being advanced in his human nature, to an honour and dignity next to that of the divine majesty; the right hand being esteemed the place of greatest honour. This exaltation of Christ, the Apostle tells us, was conferred upon him as a reward of his great humiliation and sufferings; Heb. xii. 2. *Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God.* And by virtue of this exaltation, the Apostle proves him to be exalted in his human nature above the angels, Heb. i. 3, 4. *When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they;* that is, being advanced to a higher dignity; for *name* among the Hebrews signifies dignity and honour. So the Apostle useth the word *name*, Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. *Wherefore God also hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* So likewise, Eph. i. 20, 21. *Whom he raised from the dead, and set at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.* And now, wherein this dignity doth consist, the same Apostle tells us in the next words; *That he hath put all things*

things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church; which is the ſame with what our Saviour told his Apoſtles before his aſcenſion, *All power is given me in heaven and in earth;* that is, God hath committed the government of the world into his hands, for the benefit and advantage of his church here in this world, and for the diſpenſing of rewards and puniſhments to good and bad men in the next life.

And though the Apoſtles did only ſee him taken up, and received in a cloud out of their ſight, and were not witneſſes of his advancement and exaltation at the right-hand of God, yet they had, and we have, ſufficient aſſurance of it, both by what our Saviour declared before his aſcenſion, and by the effects which followed after. Before he aſcended, he told them whither he was going, and what power and dignity would be conferred upon him, that *all power in heaven and earth was committed to him;* and that as an evidence of this exaltation at the right hand of God, and the power there conferred upon him, he would in a few days ſend down the Holy Ghoſt upon them in a ſenſible manner, and in great and ſenſible effects, enabling them to ſpeak with tongues, and to work all ſorts of miracles. After this he was in their ſight taken up from them, and carried towards heaven; and ten days after, the Holy Ghoſt, according to his promiſe, came down upon them in miraculous powers and gifts. So that here was abundant evidence to them of his exaltation in heaven, they having ſeen him taken up, and carried thitherwards, and after this finding the wonderful effects of his being there, and of the power which was conferred upon him.

The third and laſt thing to be ſpoken to, is the conſequent benefits of our Saviour's aſcenſion and exaltation; and they are chiefly theſe three: The ſending of the Holy Ghoſt; his powerful interceſſion for us at the right-hand of God; and the confirmation of our faith, as to the truth of his doctrine in general, and particularly as to his coming to judgment.

1. The ſending of the Holy Ghoſt in miraculous powers and gifts upon the Apoſtles, to qualify them for the ſpeedy and effectual propagation of the goſpel,

and to give credit to them in the preaching of it. By the gift of tongues, they are enabled to preach the gospel to all nations; and by the other miraculous powers, God bare witness to the testimony which they gave of our Saviour's doctrine and resurrection. And this was a great benefit; for to this we owe the great blessing of the gospel, and the spreading of the Christian religion through the world; and this was properly the fruit of our Saviour's ascension into heaven, and his exaltation at the right-hand of God, and of that royal power and majesty which he was invested withal. God in his wise dispensation of things having so ordered, that this dignity and power should be the reward of our Saviour's obedience and sufferings; which may serve to explain to us that passage, John vii. 39. *This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* The giving of these gifts of the Holy Ghost, was purposely reserved by God, to be an instance of that power and glory, wherewith our Saviour was to be invested upon his ascension into heaven, and exaltation at the right-hand of God; and therefore our Saviour tells his disciples, that they ought not to be troubled at his departure, because, till he had left them, the Holy Ghost would not come; John xvi. 17. *I tell you the truth, It is expedient for you that I go away: For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.*

II. Another mighty benefit of our Saviour's ascension and exaltation, is his powerful intercession for us at the right-hand of God. And this is a mighty advantage and comfort, to have a perpetual Patron and Advocate at the right-hand of God, to plead our cause, to solicit our concernments, and represent our wants, and to offer up our prayers and requests to God, in the virtue of his meritorious sacrifice; to have so good a friend in the court of heaven, in such power and favour with the great King of the world. This under the law was shadowed by the High-priest's going into the Holy of holies, once every year alone, carrying blood with him to offer for the sins of the people; answerably to which, our Saviour is once for all entered into the heavens, to intercede

intercede with God for us, by the repreſentation of that ſacrifice which he offered for our ſins, and of that blood which was ſhed for us. So the Apoſtle tells us, Heb. ix. 24. That *Chriſt is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itſelf, to appear in the preſence of God for us.* And this is a mighty comfort to us under the guilt of our ſins, that *we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, who is a propitiation for our ſins, and for the ſins of the whole world.* This is a great comfort under all trials and temptations, that *We have not an High-prieſt that cannot be touched with a ſenſe of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are.* He that is our Mediator and Interceſſor, knows by experience the infirmities of our nature, and hath learned by his own ſufferings to compaſſionate ours.

And this is a mighty encouragement to our prayers, and gives us confidence and hopes of good ſucceſs in our addreſſes to God, that are offered by ſo powerful and prevalent a hand. So the Apoſtle reaſons, Heb. iv. 14. 16. *'Seeing then we have a great High-prieſt that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God; let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

In a word, this may animate us againſt all the enemies of our ſalvation, becauſe he that hath all power in heaven and earth is concerned for us, and is continually ſoliciting our cauſe with God; Heb. vii. 25. *Wherefore he is able to ſave them to the utmoſt, who come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us.*

III. The aſcenſion of our Saviour into heaven, is a mighty confirmation of our faith, both as to the truth of his doctrine in general, and particularly as to his coming again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead, to reward the righteous, and to puniſh the ſinners and ungodly.

1. As to the truth of his doctrine in general. If after all the miracles of his life, and his reſurrection from the dead, any man can doubt whether he came from God, and was ſent by him to teach the world; yet this, methinks, is evidence beyond all exception, that God

took him to himself, that he was visibly taken up into heaven; and though the witnesses of his ascension did not see him in heaven, yet the sending of the Holy Ghost, according to his promise, was an abundant evidence that he was received up into glory. Upon this account it is that our Saviour says, that the coming of the Holy Ghost should convince the world of sin, for not believing in him; because the sending of the Holy Ghost, was an evidence that he was in glory; and his being taken up into glory, was a demonstration that he was a true Prophet, and sent from God, and consequently that they were guilty of a great sin, who did not believe in him. And,

2. This likewise is a great confirmation of our faith, as to our Saviour's coming again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead. St. Peter tells us, Acts x. 42. that our Saviour, after his resurrection, did particularly give in charge to his Apostles, *to testify to the people that it was he that was ordained of God, to be the Judge of quick and dead.* And what argument more proper to persuade them of this, than to see him visibly taken up into heaven; and at the very time of his ascension, to be admonished by angels, that this same person, whom they saw carried up into heaven, should in the same visible manner come down from heaven again at the end of the world: So the text tells us, that *while the Apostles looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,* that is, two angels in the appearance of men, *which said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven;* that is, in a visible manner, and in a cloud. For as *he was received up in a cloud out of their sight;* so at his return to judge the world, men shall *see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven,* Matth. xxiv. 30. And this is a great confirmation of our faith of a future judgment; that our Saviour immediately after his resurrection, declared himself to be appointed by God Judge of quick and dead; and when he was ascended, the angels declared that he should come again in like manner as they had seen him taken up. So that they who believe

lieve his aſcenſion, cannot doubt of his return to judgment; nothing being more credible, than the ſaying of one whom God raiſed from the dead, and viſibly took to himſelf.

And now to make ſome reflection upon what hath been delivered. The conſideration of our Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of God, is very comfortable to all true Chriſtians, in theſe two reſpects:

I. In reſpect of our condition in this world.

II. In reſpect of the happineſs of the next world.

I. In reſpect of our condition in this world. The church of Chriſt, and every particular member of it, every true Chriſtian, is expoſed to a great many troubles and dangers in this world: But it is matter of great comfort to us, in the conſideration of all evils we are liable to, that we are under his patronage and protection, who hath *all power given him in heaven and earth. He who is the head and defender of the church, is ſet down on the right hand of the majeſty of God, exalted far above principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, in this world, and that which is to come*; ſo that the true church of Chriſt need not fear either the powers of this world, or the malice of devils, becauſe we have a ſure friend, who is greater than all theſe, whom God hath made his vicegerent, and hath put all things under his feet, and hath given the government of the world, and of all creatures, into his hands, for the good and benefit of his church; who is able to protect his church, and every true member of it, againſt all the injuries of earth, and the malice of hell; and if he permit us at any time to fall into ſufferings, he is able to ſupport us under them, and to reward us for them: *and if he be for us, who can be againſt us? He that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, and maketh interceſſion for us.* Rom. xiv. 9. *For this end, Chriſt both died, and roſe, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living;* and now that he is in heaven, and clothed with majeſty and glory, he is not leſs concerned for us, than when he converſed with us upon earth, and ſuffered and died for us:

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For he is there in our nature, that nature in which he suffered more than any of us can do; and therefore we may with confidence make our applications to him in all our distresses and difficulties, because he is nearly allied to us, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and was once tempted like ourselves, and from the experience of his own trials and sufferings, still retains a quick sense of the frailties and infirmities of mortality. This consideration the Apostle to the Hebrews makes use of, to support Christians under all their persecutions for the profession of Christianity. Heb. iv. 14, 15. *Seeing then we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High-priest, that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

II. The consideration of Christ's ascension and exaltation is likewise matter of comfort to us in respect of the happiness which we hope for in the next world. No religion that ever was in the world hath given men so sensible a demonstration of a future life, and a blessed immortality in another world, as the Christian religion hath done, by the resurrection of our blessed Saviour from the dead, and his visible ascension into heaven. This is a sensible argument, and levelled to the capacities of all mankind. The reasonings of the philosophers concerning the immortality of mens souls, and a future state after this life, besides the uncertainty of them, have also this disadvantage, that they are only calculated for the more refined and speculative part of mankind: But every man is capable of the force of this argument, that he who declared to the world another life after this, and the happy condition of good men in another world, was himself raised from the dead, and visibly taken up into heaven. And now it is no difficult matter for us to believe that God will raise us, and advance us to glory and happiness, when we consider what an earnest he hath given us of this, by *the working of that mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places.*

If then we believe that Christ is ascended into hea-

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ven, and ſits at the right hand of God, let this raiſe our minds above the vain delights and periſhing enjoyments of this world, to the conſideration of thoſe better and more glorious things that are above; let us often aſcend thither in our thoughts, whither our Saviour is gone before us, to prepare a place for us; and from whence he hath promiſed to come again at the end of the world, to *receive us to himſelf, that where he is, there we may be alſo.*

But then we muſt endeavour to live as he did, if we hope to go to him when we die. *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himſelf even as he is pure. Let us then have our converſation in heaven, from whence alſo we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf.*

To conclude; let us heartily thank God for the whole diſpenſation of our ſalvation, by the incarnation and doctrine, by the holy life and meritorious death of our bleſſed Saviour, and by that demonſtration of God's mighty power and goodneſs, *which he wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come; having put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.*

The conſideration whereof is, as you have heard, a mighty conſolation to us under all the troubles and dangers to which the church of Chriſt is expoſed in this world. He who hath all power committed to him by God, and is made head over all things for the benefit and advantage of the church, we may be ſure, will have a particular care of it, and tender it as his own body: And as he is able, he is ready upon all occaſions to protect and defend his own religion, and the true profeſſors of it, againſt all the fury and malice of men and devils, ſo that the gates of hell, the ſtrongeſt combinations and deepeſt conſpiracies of all the powers of darkneſs, *ſhall not* finally *prevail againſt it.* Here is the foundation of

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our hopes and confidence that our Redeemer is ſtrong, and that God hath given him a kingdom and power, that is paramount and ſuperior to all earthly kingdoms and powers; and though they ſhould conſpire together, and be of one mind, unite all their force, and *give their power and ſtrength unto the beaſt, to make war with the Lamb and his company*, that is, the true church and faithful ſervants of Chriſt; yet *the Lamb ſhall overcome them, becauſe he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.*

And let us likewiſe bleſs God for the wonderful reſtoration of his Majeſty to the government of theſe kingdoms, who under Chriſt is the great defender of our faith and religion; and let us pay that duty and obedience, which becomes us, to a Prince whom God hath ſo miraculouſly preſerved and reſtored; and pour out our moſt fervent prayers to God, that he would long preſerve him, and protect his perſon from all dangers, who is the great ſecurity of our religion*, and the life of all our hopes, and as truly as any Prince ever was to any people, the light of our eyes, and the breath of our noſtrils; and that God would make him *wiſe as an angel of God, to go in and out before this great people*; and grant to him, and all the people of this land, *to know in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes.*

* *Preached toward the concluſion of the reign of King Charles II.*

SER-

SERMON CXCVII.

Of the gift of tongues conferred on the Apoſtles.

Preached on Whitſunday.

Acts ii. 1, 2, 3.

And when the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven, as of a mighty ruſhing wind, and it filled all the houſe where they were ſitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it ſat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

ONE of the chief deſigns of the diſpenſation of God towards the Jews, and of the giving of the law to them by Moſes, was to be a type of the Chriſtian church, and of the diſpenſation of the goſpel by the Son of God; and therefore no wonder, if there be a great correſpondence between them, and that the divine providence ſhould ſo order the event of things, that the ſeaſons of diſpenſing the great evangelical bleſſings, ſhould happen at the ſame times, when the great bleſſings of the law, which were the types of them, were diſpenſed and commemorated. Thus our Saviour, who was the *Lamb of God*, was ſlain and offered up at the ſame time that the paſſover was kept, and the paſchal lamb was ſlain and offered up among the Jews; and the redemption of the world from the ſlavery of ſin and ſatan, is celebrated by Chriſtians, at the very ſame ſeaſon of the year, when the deliverance of the Iſraelites from the Egyptian ſlavery was commemorated by them: And as at the time of Pentecoſt, which was fifty days after, the Jews were appointed to rejoice before

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the Lord, and to offer their firſt-fruis by way of grateful acknowledgment to God for the fruits of the earth, then newly gathered in; ſo did God likewiſe at the ſame time impart the firſt-fruits of the holy Spirit to the Apoſtles, who were to be the firſt and chief labourers in that ſpiritual harveſt, to which they were appointed by the *Lord of the harveſt:* And which is yet more remarkable, at the ſame ſeaſon that the law was delivered to the Jews from mount Sinai, and the firſt covenant eſtabliſhed, namely, at the time of Pentecoſt, as is commonly ſuppoſed by the Jewiſh Doctors, and as may probably be collected from the text, Exod. xix. 1. I ſay, at that very time, the goſpel, which contains the terms of the new covenant, began to be publiſhed from mount Sion, in as wonderful, though not ſo terrible a manner, as the law was given from mount Sinai. And thus it was foretold by the ancient Prophets, Iſa. ii. 3. and Micah iv. 2. that *out of Sion ſhould go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jeruſalem.*

I ſhall briefly explain the words, and as I paſs along make ſome ſhort obſervations upon them, and then fix upon that which is mainly intended in them, *viz.* this firſt and moſt miraculous gift of the Holy Ghoſt, which was conferred upon the Apoſtles when they were aſſembled together at Jeruſalem upon the day of Pentecoſt.

When the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, that is, when the fifty days after Eaſter were fulfilled, upon the fiftieth day, which was called *the day of Pentecoſt*, *they were all with one accord in one place. They were all*, that is, all the twelve Apoſtles; for upon them it was that the gift of tongues was beſtowed; becauſe they were appointed to be the chief publiſhers of the goſpel, heving been eye witneſſes of our Saviour's miracles, and particularly of his reſurrection from the dead. There is no mention of any other in this chapter but only of the twelve Apoſtles; ver. 14. we find *Peter and the eleven* ſpoken of; and ver. 37. it is ſaid that the multitude, who were aſtoniſhed at this miracle, *ſpake to Peter and the reſt of the Apoſtles.*

They were all with one accord in one place. Unity is an excellent qualification and diſpoſition for the holy

Spirit

Spirit of God and his gifts; for which reaſon, the peace and good agreement of Chriſtians is called by St. Paul, *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* When the Apoſtles were *of one heart and one mind*, then the holy Spirit of God came down upon them in this wonderful manner.

Ver. 2. *And ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven, as of a ruſhing mighty wind.* As they were together *waiting for the promiſe of the Father*, all on the ſudden there came a ſound, as of a ſtrong guſt of wind. This was a fit emblem of the divine Spirit; for to this our Saviour had compared it, in his diſcourſe with Nicodemus, John iii. 8. *The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: ſo is every one that is born of the ſpirit.*

As of a ruſhing mighty wind. To ſignify to us, that the publication of the goſpel was attended with the ſame divine preſence and power, that the giving of the law was; but not with the ſame circumſtances of terror, which the Apoſtle to the Hebrews deſcribes, when he ſets forth to us the difference between mount Sinai and mount Sion, that is, between the two diſpenſations of *the law and the goſpel.* Heb. xii. 18, 19. ſpeaking of mount Sinai, from which the law was given, *Ye are not come*, ſays he, *unto the mount, that might not be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackneſs, and darkneſs, and tempeſt, and the ſound of a trumpet, and the voice of words;* that is, that terrible voice of God, wherein the ten words of the law were delivered; *which voice then ſhook the earth*, as the Apoſtle tells us, ver. 26. *A voice ſo terrible, that they who heard it, earneſtly begged that they might hear it no more.* Theſe were all circumſtances of great horror: But at the coming down of the Holy Ghoſt, here was no trumpet nor terrifying voice, no thunder, nor darkneſs, nor tempeſt, only the ſound, as it were, of a ſtrong guſt of wind, as a ſenſible ſignification of a divine preſence and power.

And it filled all the houſe where they were ſitting. The whole houſe, to repreſent the world, which was to be filled with the ſound of the goſpel; according to that of the Pſalmiſt, cited by St. Paul, Rom. x. 18. where

ſpeaking of the general publication of the goſpel, *Their ſound*, ſays he, *went out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.*

It filled all the houſe. This is that, which, ver. 5. of this chapter, our Saviour calls baptizing the Apoſtles *with the Holy Ghoſt*, ſo that they who ſat in the houſe were as it were immerſed in the Holy Ghoſt, as they who were baptized with water, were overwhelmed and covered all over with water, which is the proper notion of baptiſm.

Ver. 3. *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as it were of fire, and ſat upon each of them. Cloven tongues*, to ſignify the diverſity and diſtribution of them; this gift being imparted to every one of the Apoſtles: For it is ſaid, that theſe tongues *ſat upon each of them.*

Cloven tongues as it were of fire, to ſignify the penetrating virtue and efficacy of their preaching. And this is that which John the Baptiſt calls *baptizing with the Holy Ghoſt, and with fire*, meaning the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles, in the form of fiery tongues; divided, to ſignify the diverſity of them. At firſt men were all of one language; and the confuſion and diviſion of tongues was a curſe and puniſhment upon them, and the cauſe of their diſperſion through the world; but now, God by the gift of ſeveral tongues deſigned to gather mankind together, and to unite them in one religion.

And it ſat upon each of them. Theſe cloven fiery tongues ſat upon each of the Apoſtles, that is, remained viſibly upon them for ſome time; to ſignify the permanency of this gift of tongues. It was not like ſeveral of the other miraculous gifts, which did not conſtantly reſide upon them; for they had them not at all times, nor when they pleaſed, but as God was pleaſed to diſpenſe and communicate them: But this gift of tongues was conſtant, becauſe they had the continual uſe of it; and it was common to all the Apoſtles, becauſe they were to be the publiſhers of the goſpel, and the witneſſes of our Lord's reſurrection, which was the great miracle whereby the goſpel was to be confirmed.

Ver. 4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues, as the Spirit gav*

them

them utterance. And began to ſpeak with other tongues: The vulgar tranſlation renders it, *variis linguis*, "with "divers tongues;" that is, they ſpake ſeveral languages beſides their own mother tongue, or, as it is expreſſed in our Saviour's promiſe to the Apoſtles, Mark xvi. 17. *with new tongues. Theſe ſigns*, ſays our Lord before his aſcenſion, *ſhall follow them that believe; they ſhall ſpeak with new tongues;* that is, they ſhould all on the ſudden ſpeak languages which they had never learned, nor had any knowledge of before.

I know not who was the firſt author of that conceit, that the miracle was not in the ſpeakers, but in the hearers; that is, the Apoſtles ſpake in their own mother tongue, the Syriac, and the hearers of ſeveral nations heard them every one in their own language; which indeed muſt be acknowledged to be as great a miracle, or greater, than if the Apoſtles had ſpoken ſo many different languages: But this ſeems to be a very groundleſs, and unreaſonable conceit, and very contrary to this relation of this miraculous gift, and to all the circumſtances of it. For the text expreſly ſays, that *they ſpake with other tongues*, that is, in languages different from their mother tongue, in which they ſpake before, otherwiſe they could not be called *other* or *new tongues*. And 1 Cor. xii. 28. the Apoſtle, among the ſeveral gifts which God had beſtowed upon the church, mentions *diverſity of tongues*, which had not been true, if the Apoſtles had all ſpoken in one language. And ver. 30. he makes a difference between the gift of ſpeaking ſeveral languages, and interpreting things ſpoken in divers tongues. *Do all*, ſays he, *ſpeak with tongues? Do all interpret?* But if what the Apoſtles had ſpoken in one language, had been heard by thoſe of ſeveral nations in their own language, there had been no need of interpretation. And chap. xiv. ver. 2. *He that ſpeaketh in an unknown tongue, ſpeaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man heareth him;* that is, no man underſtandeth what he ſaith, God only knows it; whereas if they heard every one in their own language, they all underſtood what was ſaid. And ver. 13. *Wherefore let him that ſpeaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret.* But what need of that, if every one heard

what was ſpoken in his own tongue? And ver. 16. the Apoſtle ſays, that *he that was unlearned, could not ſay amen at giving of thanks in an unknown tongue; becauſe he underſtood not what was ſaid.* And ver. 27. *If any man ſpeak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at moſt by three, and that by courſe, and let one interpret.* All which plainly contradicts that fooliſh conceit, that the miracle of the gift of tongues was not in the ſpeakers, but the hearers.

That which ſeems to have given occaſion to this error, was, that they could not underſtand how any man ſhould at the ſame time ſpeak divers languages: But there is no ground at all to ſuppoſe ſo; becauſe it is not ſaid, that any of the Apoſtles did at the ſame time ſpeak ſeveral languages, (which is impoſſible) but that the Apoſtles ſpake ſeveral languages, ſo that the ſeveral nations then preſent heard ſome or other of the Apoſtles ſpeaking in their own language. So that to trouble ourſelves no farther about this idle conceit, the miracle was not, that every one of the Apoſtles did ſpeak ſeveral languages at the ſame time; but that they all ſpake on a ſudden languages which they had never learnt before; ſo that the people of ſeveral nations, that were then preſent, did then hear ſome or other of the Apoſtles ſpeaking to them in their own language.

Having thus explained the ſeveral expreſſions and paſſages in the text,

I come now to ſpeak to the main argument contained in them, *viz.* This miraculous gift which was conferred on the Apoſtles, of ſpeaking all on the ſudden the languages of all nations, with whom they had occaſion to converſe, though they had never learned them before.

And in the handling of this argument, theſe following particulars will be fit to be conſidered, and enquired into by us.

Firſt, The ſtrangeneſs of this gift or miracle.

Secondly, The clear evidence of this miracle, that it was real, and that there was no manner of impoſture or deceit in it, nor could there be any ſuſpicion of it.

Thirdly, The wonderful effect of it immediately, and upon

upon the ſpot, upon the very day, and in the place where it was firſt wrought.

Fourthly, The great neceſſity and uſefulneſs of it.

Fifthly, The reaſon why it was the firſt of all the miraculous gifts, and ſo viſibly conferred upon the Apoſtles, before any of the reſt.

Sixthly, and laſtly, I ſhall enquire, whether there be any neceſſity now, and conſequently any probability of the renewing this miracle, in order to the converſion of the infidel world, and thoſe many and great nations in the remoter parts of the world, which do ſtill continue ſtrangers and enemies to the Chriſtian religion.

Firſt, The ſtrangeneſs of this gift or miracle. It was of that nature, that the like was never known in the world, neither before nor ſince the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, upon any occaſion whatſoever; nor can we well imagine any other ſort of miracle that could probably affect men more, and ſtrike them with greater wonder and admiration, and have been a more ſenſible demonſtration of a divine power and preſence accompanying the Apoſtles, than to ſee and hear them all on the ſudden perfectly to ſpeak ſo many languages, which they had never learned before.

Eſpecially if all the circumſtances of the thing be duly weighed and conſidered; that they who pretended to be endowed with this gift, were not ſtrangers newly arrived and come to Jeruſalem, who before they came thither might poſſibly by great ſtudy and pains have attained to the knowledge and ſkill of ſeveral languages, (each of them ſuppoſe two languages a piece) and have craftily combined together to impoſe upon the world, by the pretence and oſtentation of ſuch a miracle; but theſe perſons were known to all that dwelt in Jeruſalem, and had for a long time been taken notice of as the diſciples and followers of Jeſus, who was lately crucified among them; their education was known, and the meanneſs of their condition, that they were ſimple and illiterate perſons, who never had the advantage or opportunity of attaining to this ſkill in an ordinary way; and therefore it muſt be concluded to have been an extraordinary and ſupernatural gift.

Beſides, that this miracle was very publickly wrought,

and the noiſe of it in a few hours drew together the ſtrangers of ſeveral nations, who being become proſelytes of the Jewiſh religion, dwelt at Jeruſalem; theſe all coming together, upon the noiſe and fame of this miracle, found it to be true, and, as appears from the hiſtory, were ſo well ſatisfied of the reality of it, that a very great number, upon the occaſion of it, and upon that very day, became proſelytes to the Chriſtian religion, and joined themſelves to the Apoſtles and their followers, who were then but few in number, and were preſently admitted into the Chriſtian church by baptiſm, the uſual ceremony of admitting proſelytes among the Jews. This was a preſent and great effect, and is a great evidence and confirmation of the truth and reality of the thing: But this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more fully to, when I come to the fifth particular which I propoſed.

I add farther, that our Saviour ſeems to have reckoned this as one of the greateſt of miracles, and therefore to have reſerved it, for an inſtance and demonſtration of the glorious power which he was inveſted withal, after his aſcenſion into heaven; as may very probably be collected from that declaration and promiſe which he made to his Apoſtles, a little before his departure from them, John xiv. 12. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do ſhall he do alſo, and greater works than theſe ſhall he do, becauſe I go unto my Father*; that is, in order to the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt, to endow them with power from on high, to qualify them for the publiſhing of the goſpel, which they were forbidden to enter upon till this promiſe was made good to them. But what were theſe greater works, which he here promiſeth to enable them to do, after he was gone to his Father? For he expreſly promiſeth, that they ſhould not only do the works which he had done, but greater works than thoſe: and what could theſe be? Our Saviour had wrought many and great miracles almoſt in all kinds imaginable; he had caſt out devils, and healed all ſorts of infirmities and diſeaſes: he had changed nature, by turning water into wine, and had ſtopped the courſe of it, by ſtilling the winds and the ſea by his word; and he had raiſed the dead; and now what

what work could that be which was greater than any of theſe? Even that which I am ſpeaking of, the miraculous power of ſpeaking all languages, without learning them; a thing never heard of in the world before. And this was the firſt ſenſible effect of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt upon them, the firſt miraculous power with which he endowed his Apoſtles, after he was aſcended into heaven, and gone to his Father; an evident teſtimony of the glory and power which he was inveſted withal, after he was taken up into heaven, and ſat down at the right hand of God, to ſignify both the honour and power which was conferred upon him, in that he enabled his Apoſtles, when he was abſent from them, to do that, which whilſt he was preſent with them, he had never enabled them to do, nor ever did himſelf; all which tends to advance this miracle, and to ſhew the greatneſs and ſtrangeneſs of it above any other. And unleſs we fix it upon this miracle, it will be hard, if not impoſſible, to give a good account of the accompliſhing of that ſolemn promiſe of our Saviour to his diſciples, after he ſhould be gone to his Father, that is, after his aſcenſion into heaven; *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do ſhall he do alſo, and greater works than theſe ſhall he do, becauſe I go unto my Father.* Now what miraculous work can be inſtanced in, that was done by the Apoſtles, and was greater than any our Saviour did, when he was upon earth, but this only of ſpeaking all languages on the ſudden, without ever having learned them? which conſideration alone does confirm me paſt all doubt, that our Saviour in this promiſe meant the miraculous gift of tongues,, which was the firſt gift that was conferred upon them, after he was aſcended into heaven, and gone to his Father. I proceed,

Secondly, To conſider the clear evidence of this miracle, that it was real, and that there could be no ſuſpicion of any manner of impoſture and deceit in it.

It was publickly wrought before many witneſſes, and thoſe the moſt competent of all other, becauſe they were highly prejudiced againſt the Apoſtles, and great enemies to them, as being the diſciples of him whom they had ſo lately crucified as an impoſtor. They gave clear proof

proof of this miraculous power in the presence of great multitudes of several nations, who heard them every one speaking to them in their own language: And besides the present demonstration of this miraculous gift, to those of several nations that dwelt at Jerusalem, they gave evidence of it in all places and nations whither they went preaching the gospel; so that this miracle accompanied and continued with them, till the gospel was made known to a great part of the then known world, and lasted for a whole age, and till there was no farther need and use of it.

But it may be said, that tho' this was sufficiently evident to them that dwelt at Jerusalem, who knew the Apostles, and the circumstances of their education; yet it was not so credible to others, who lived remote from Jerusalem, and neither knew the Apostles, nor the manner of their education, nor were witnesses of the miraculous rise and beginning of this gift of tongues. These could only hear them speak in their language; but whether their knowledge of this language had been acquired by study, or as supernatural and infused, for this they had only common fame, and the Apostles own word, which may seem to have been but a slender evidence for a thing so strange. And so it must be acknowledged to be, if the Apostles affirmation, that this gift was supernaturally conferred upon them, had not been otherwise countenanced and supported; as it was in a very extraordinary and remarkable manner by their being endowed with a power to work other miracles of all kinds, which they did every where, and very frequently upon all occasions. And this was sufficient to give credit to what they affirmed, concerning this supernatural gift of tongues: For when they saw them work other miracles of all sorts, they had no reason to doubt of the truth and reality of this miraculous gift of tongues, which was abundantly confirmed by the other miraculous powers with which they were endowed. So that the gospel, wherever it came, carried its own evidence along with it, and was confirmed by the very manner of its conveyance and delivery; and well might men entertain it as a divine doctrine, when the very manner and means, whereby it was conveyed to the

the world was ſo ſtrange and aſtoniſhing a miracle, as was never wrought in the world before, upon any occaſion whatſoever. And this will yet be farther evident, if we conſider, in the

Third place, The wonderful effect which this miracle immediately had upon the ſpot, and on the very day, when it firſt appeared.

It had ſo glaring an evidence, and carried ſuch conviction in it, that the doctrine which they who were endowed with miraculous gifts did preach, was immediately received and entertained by a very great number of the hearers; who, upon the conviction of this great miracle, became proſelytes to this new religion, and were ſolemnly admitted to the profeſſion of it by baptiſm; as we read, ver. 41. of this chapter; where after St. Peter had made an end of his ſermon to the people upon this occaſion, it is ſaid, *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the ſame day there were added unto them about three thouſand ſouls.* Here was a mighty effect, *three thouſand* converted at one ſermon, being convinced by the evidence of this miracle, and it was a very immediate effect; for it is ſaid, that *the ſame day, three thouſand were added to the church.* Here was an effect proportionable to the greatneſs and ſtrangeneſs of its cauſe; a mighty victory gained over the prejudices of men, and the powers of darkneſs, by the light and conviction of this miracle, which our Saviour ſeems to have kept in reſerve for this great occaſion, when his goſpel and religion was to be firſt publiſhed, and to make its ſolemn entrance into the world. Here was a large portion of firſt-fruits, and a great earneſt of that ſpiritual harveſt which the Apoſtles had begun to reap; of which the firſt-fruits among the Jews were a type: For their harveſt alſo was at this very ſeaſon of the year; as I noted before.

Fourthly, We will conſider the great uſefulneſs of this miraculous gift, for the more eaſy and ſpeedy conveyance of the doctrine of Chriſtianity, and the diffuſing and ſpreading the knowledge of it in the world; and this, if we conſider it, not as a miracle, but only as a means ſo very convenient to this purpoſe, that by the advantage of it, the goſpel made a greater progreſs in

the

the ſpace of a few years, than in human probability could have been made without it in many ages; and it was ſpread farther in thirty years, than could in reaſon have been expected in fifteen hundred, by natural and ordinary means? *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed;* being carried on in ſo powerful and ſupernatural a manner.

Fifthly, We will conſider, why this was the firſt miraculous gift conferred upon the Apoſtles more viſibly, and before any of the reſt. The other miraculous powers were only viſible in their effects; but this was viſible, not only in the effects of it, but likewiſe in the cauſe and the manner of its being conferred: *For the Holy Spirit reſted upon them, in the form of fiery cloven tongues;* to ſignify not only the diverſity of languages which they ſhould be enabled to ſpeak, but the quick and piercing efficacy of their ſpeech. The reaſon of all which ſeems to be, becauſe this was the greateſt of all miracles, and therefore fit to be firſt: For, as I ſhewed before, this, in the judgment of our Saviour, (who beſt underſtood the different degrees of miracles) was greater than any of thoſe, which he himſelf in his life-time had wrought; and likewiſe, becauſe this miracle was of greater uſe than any of the reſt, and more neceſſary to the effectual diſcharge of their Apoſtolical office, and to the eaſy ſucceſs, and more ſpeedy effect of it. For by this miraculous gift more eſpecially, the apoſtles were, as it were, conſecrated to their office, and made capable to diſcharge it with eaſe and effect; their office being to publiſh the doctrine of the goſpel to the world, and to be witneſſes of our Saviour's reſurrection from the dead, which was to be the great confirmation of his doctrine; neither of which they could, with any probability of effect and ſucceſs, have done without th[illegible]aculous gift: For what ſlow progreſs muſt they have made, and how little could they have advanced in this work, had they either done all by interpreters, or been put to have learned the languages of theſe ſeveral nations to which they had been to preach, before they could have publiſhed this doctrine among them?

The Jews, who were very zealous of their religion, (which was likewiſe from God, and was atteſted by miracles)

racles) upon occaſion of ſeveral calamities which befel them, and carried them into captivity, were diſperſed in ſeveral nations; and yet how ſlowly, for want of this gift, did they gain proſelytes to their religion? And how few did they convert to it in the ſpace of four or five hundred years? By which we may judge how little Chriſtianity would have gained upon the world, had it not been countenanced and aſſiſted from heaven in this miraculous manner. I come now to the

Sixth and laſt thing which I propoſed to enquire into; namely, Whether there be any neceſſity now, and conſequently probability of the renewing of this miracle, in order to the converſion of infidels, and the gaining over of thoſe many and great nations in the remoter parts of the world, who are ſtill ſtrangers and enemies to the Chriſtian religion.

That which would induce a man to hope well in this caſe, is, that without ſome ſuch miraculous gift, there is little or no probability of the converſion of infidel nations; unleſs God ſhould be pleaſed, by ſome unexpected means, to bring over to Chriſtianity ſome powerful Prince of great reputation for his wiſdom and virtue; who by the influence of his example, and by his favour and countenance, might give advantages to the planting of it among his ſubjects. And yet conſidering the inveterate and violent prejudices of men againſt a new religion, ſuch an attempt would, in all human probability, be more likely to end in the ruin of the Prince, and the overturning of his government, than in the eſtabliſhment of a new religion. Of which kind there have been ſeveral inſtances very remarkable in Japan and Ethiopia, and perhaps in places and times nearer to us, and within our own memory.

But if any ſuch thing ſhould be attempted by private perſons, the undertaking would meet with ſuch inſuperable obſtacles, not only from the prejudices and intereſts of men, but from the great difficulty of gaining languages ſo different from our own, that it muſt in all likelihood have a very ſlow progreſs, and at laſt fall to the ground, for want of proper and effectual means to carry it on. For though the morality of the Chriſtian religion be admirable, and very apt to recommend itſelf

ſelf to the unbiaſſed and impartial reaſon of mankind (if any ſuch thing were any where to be found;) yet * the death of the Son of God is ſuch a ſtumbling-block, as is very hard for human reaſon to get over. Of which the Jeſuits in China were ſo ſenſible, that according to their uſual ſincerity, they thought beſt to conceal that moſt eſſential part of the Chriſtian doctrine, which relates to the death and ſufferings of our Saviour. So I am ſure St. Paul took it to be, when he tells the Corinthians, that *he determined to know nothing among them, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.* This it ſeems he looked upon as the moſt material and valuable part of the Chriſtian religion, and of the greateſt conſequence to be known by us. But the Jeſuits, it ſeems, thought otherwiſe, and therefore concealed it from their converts: For which moſt ſhameful and unchriſtian practice, ſeveral of them were very lately under proſecution at Rome.

Beſides all this, † the matters of fact upon which the truth of Chriſtianity does neceſſarily depend, as the birth, and life, and miracles, and death, and reſurrection of our bleſſed Saviour, and his viſible aſcenſion into heaven; I ſay, theſe matters of fact, tho' we have a moſt credible hiſtory and relation of them brought down to us, do not carry ſo ſtrong and ſenſible a conviction in them, to thoſe who never heard of them before, as to be able to conquer and bear down a violent prejudice: Nor is it in reaſon to be expected, that theſe things ſhould eaſily be admitted by thoſe who are utter ſtrangers to our hiſtory of former times, and conſequently not fit to judge of what value they are.

I ſpeak not this to diſcourage any from uſing their beſt endeavours to propagate our religion among infidels, where the providence of God opens a door, and gives any opportunity for it. Among the many bad things that have been done in the church of Rome, there is one thing very much to their honour, that they have been at very great charge and pains in their miſſions for the converſion of infidel nations, eſpecially in the eaſtern parts of the world, to that which they account the true Chriſtian religion. And if the matter had been as honeſtly

* *See ſermon* 193. † *See the ſame diſcourſe.*

honeſtly managed, as I hope it was piouſly intended, and their charity and zeal had been equally warm for the converſion of the northern infidels, where there is nothing to be met with but froſt and cold, as it hath been for the converſion of thoſe parts of the world where gold and ſpices abound, it had deſerved great praiſe, notwithſtanding their miſtakes in religion, and the great mixture of errors and corruptions in it.

And it is no ſmall reproach to the Proteſtant religion, that there hath not appeared an equal zeal among us for this purpoſe; and that to our unwearied endeavours to promote the intereſt of trade in foreign parts, there hath not been joined a like zeal and induſtry for the propagating of the Chriſtian religion; which might ſurely be attempted with more than ordinary advantage, in thoſe places where we have ſo free a commerce.

It is not good for men to be confident, where they are not certain; but * it ſeems to me not impoſſible, if the converſion of infidels to Chriſtianity were ſincerely and vigorouſly attempted by men of honeſt minds, who would make it their buſineſs to inſtruct thoſe who are ſtrangers to our religion in the pure doctrine of Chriſtianity, free from all human mixtures and corruptions; it ſeems to me in this caſe not at all improbable, that God would extraordinarily countenance ſuch an attempt, by all fitting aſſiſtance, as he did the firſt publication of the goſpel: for as the wiſdom of God is not wont to do that which is ſuperfluous, ſo neither is it wanting in that which is neceſſary. And from what hath been ſaid upon this argument the neceſſity ſeems to be much the ſame that it was at firſt.

I would not be miſtaken in what I have ſaid about this matter; I do not deliver it as poſitive, but only as probable divinity; no ways contrary to ſcripture, and very agreeable to reaſon.

Thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken concerning this miraculous gift of tongues, conferred upon the Apoſtles at the time of Pentecoſt.

* See the fore-cited diſcourſe.

SERMON CXCVIII.

Of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, as an Advocate for Chriſt.

JOHN xvi. 7. 8.

Nevertheleſs, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.

THeſe words are part of our Saviour's laſt ſermon, which he made to his diſciples a little before he left the world: and this ſermon is only recorded by this Evangeliſt, who hath ſet it down at large in the xivth, xvth and xvith chapters of his goſpel. The main ſcope of it is, firſt to perſuade them to the obedience and practice of that holy doctrine which he had delivered to them while he was with them; and then, becauſe their hearts were full of ſorrow at the thoughts of his departure from them, knowing that for his ſake they ſhould be ill treated by the world, he arms them againſt theſe diſcouragements; he promiſeth, not long after his departure from them, to ſend down his holy Spirit upon them in miraculous powers and gifts, as a teſtimony to the world of the truth of his doctrine, and a clear conviction that he came from God; ver. 26. of the xvth chap. *But when the Comforter*, or rather the Advocate, *is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he ſhall teſtify of me. And ye ſhall alſo bear witneſs, becauſe ye have been with me from the beginning.* The teſtimony which the holy Spirit ſhould give to them, ſhould give credit and ſtrength to their teſtimony.

And

And this conſideration he makes uſe of to comfort them under the ſad thoughts of his departure, becauſe his abſence would be abundantly recompenſed to them by the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, which could not be till he had left the world; becauſe this Comforter, or Advocate, was to be ſent in his name, to come upon his account, and in his ſtead, to ſupply his abſence. So that though they were greatly troubled at the thoughts of his departure, there was no cauſe for it, when all things were conſidered; for in truth it was for their advantage, that he ſhould depart from them; verſe the 6th of this chapter, *But becauſe I have ſaid theſe things unto you, ſorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheleſs, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you, that I go away. For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.*

From which words I ſhall conſider theſe two things.

Firſt, The neceſſity of Chriſt's leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghoſt: *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you.*

Secondly, The happy conſequence and effects of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt: *And when he is come, he ſhall reprove the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.* I ſhall as briefly as I can explain both theſe

Firſt, The neceſſity of Chriſt's leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghoſt: *Nevertheleſs, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you, that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you.* That it is the Holy Ghoſt which is here ſpoken of, and that as a perſon, and not as a quality, or power, or virtue, is plain from our Saviour's diſcourſe all along this ſermon, in which he is ſpoken of under the notion of a perſon, and that in as plain and expreſs terms as Chriſt himſelf is. As the Father ſent Chriſt, ſo he is ſaid to ſend the Holy Ghoſt; as Chriſt is ſaid to depart, ſo the Holy Ghoſt is ſaid to come; as Chriſt is called an Advocate, ſo the Holy Ghoſt is ſaid to be another Advo-

cate; Chriſt our Advocate to plead our cauſe with God, he Chriſt's Advocate to plead his cauſe with the world; chap. xiv. 16. 17. *And I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* And who is that? *Even the Spirit of truth.* And chap. xv. 26. *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth.* And in the verſe immediately after the text, *Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come.* But expreſly, chap. xiv. 26. he is called *the Holy Ghoſt: But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my name, he ſhall teach you all things.*

All the difficulty is concerning the word παράκλητος, which our tranſlation renders the Comforter. It is true indeed, that the verb παρακαλεῖν is of a very large and unlimited ſignification; it ſometimes ſignifies to *comfort*, very frequently *to preach, teach*, and *exhort*, and ſometimes *to plead as an Advocate the cauſe of another.* And this ſeems to be the proper notion of the word παράκλητος in this place, *the Advocate or Patron of a cauſe*, one that pleads for the party accuſed. And in this ſenſe, and no other, Chriſt is called our παράκλητος, or *Advocate with the Father*, 1 John ii. 1. *If any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous.* And as Chriſt is *our Advocate with the Father* in heaven; ſo the Spirit is *Chriſt's Advocate* here on earth, and pleads his cauſe with the world. And it is very obſervable, that this very word Paraclete, though it be not an Hebrew, but a Greek word, is frequently uſed both by the Chaldee paraphraſt, and other Jewiſh writers, in this ſenſe of *an Advocate.* And that this notion of the word agrees beſt with this place, I ſhall clearly ſhew, when I come to the ſecond head of my diſcourſe, namely, to ſhew the happy conſequence and effect of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, *viz.* the convincing of the world how injuriouſly they had dealt with Chriſt, and the clear vindication of his innocency, which is the proper office and work of an Advocate.

Having thus fixed the notion of the word παράκλητος in this place, we will now enquire what neceſſity or expediency there was, that Chriſt ſhould leave the world,

world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghost: *It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Advocate will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

And of this I shall give an account in these two particulars:

I. From the method of the divine dispensation, in the redemption and salvation of man by Jesus Christ.

II. From the rational suitableness and congruity of this dispensation.

I. From the method of the divine dispensation, in the redemption and salvation of man by Jesus Christ. Thus the scripture tells us, that God in his infinite wisdom had designed and ordered things, that the Son of God should come into the world, and live in a mean and abject condition; that he should be despised and rejected of men, persecuted and put to death; and that, as a reward of all this submission and suffering, he should be raised again from the dead, taken up into heaven, and placed on the right hand of the Majesty on high; and that in the triumph of his ascension, he should lead captive death and hell, and all the powers of darkness; and being entered into the highest heavens, and set on the right-hand of God, as an act of power and royalty, he should send down his holy Spirit in miraculous gifts upon men, for the conviction of the world, that the doctrine which he commanded his apostles to publish to all nations, was from God. And therefore the Apostle St. Paul tells us expressly, that the communication of these gifts of the Spirit was the proper effect and consequent of our Lord's exaltation, and one of the first acts of royalty which he exercised after he was possessed of his glorious kingdom, Eph. iv. 7, 8. where speaking of the various gifts of the Spirit, *Unto every one of us*, saith he, *is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* For which he cites the prediction of David, Psal. lxviii. 18. *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* And, *he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors, and teachers.* So that we plainly see, that this was the dispensation of God, and the method which his wisdom

had pitched upon, that our Lord ſhould firſt leave the world, and be taken up into glory, and then ſend down the Holy Ghoſt in the plentiful effuſions of miraculous gifts. So this Evangeliſt expreſly tells us in another place which gives great light to this text, John vii. 39. *But this*, ſaith he, *ſpake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him ſhould receive: for the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified:* implying that, according to the divine diſpoſal, it was ordered firſt, that Chriſt ſhould be glorified, and being veſted in his kingdom and glory, that then he ſhould do acts of grace, and, like a King at his coronation, ſcatter and diſpenſe his gifts among men, by ſending down his holy Spirit among them. And accordingly we find St. Peter, Acts ii. after that the Holy Ghoſt came down upon them, giving this account of it; ver. 32. 33. *This Jeſus hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are witneſſes: therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, he hath ſhed forth that which ye now ſee and hear*; meaning the gift of tongues; ſo that he reſolves it into the diſpenſation of God, who had thus deſigned and ordered things. And therefore in the

Second place, I ſhall ſhew, that this diſpenſation is very congruous and ſuitable to the divine wiſdom. For as it was convenient that the Son of God ſhould aſſume our nature, and come into the world, and dwell among us, that he might reform mankind by the purity of his doctrine, and the pattern of his holy life; and likewiſe that he ſhould ſuffer death, for the expiation of ſin, in ſuch a manner as might not only advance the mercy, but aſſert and vindicate the holineſs of God, and teſtify his great hatred and diſpleaſure againſt ſin: ſo likewiſe, after he had thus abaſed himſelf to the loweſt degree of meanneſs and ſuffering, it was very ſuitable to the divine goodneſs to reward ſuch great ſufferings with great glory, by raiſing him from the dead, and taking him up into heaven; but it was not fit, when he had left the world, that the great work for which he came into it ſhould be given over, and come to nothing, for want of effectual proſecution, without any fruit and effect of ſo much ſweat and blood. And therefore,

fore, though it had *pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief*, as the Prophet expresseth it, yet the divine wisdom had so ordered things, that after *he had made his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; that he should see* some fruit of *the travail of his soul, and be satisfied*, as the Prophet foretells, Isa. liii. 10 So that as it was expedient that he should die and depart this life, so it was also requisite afterwards that he, who had begun this great and good work of the redemption and salvation of man, should take care to have it still prosecuted and carried on: and accordingly, when he was ascended into heaven, he still promotes the same design *per vicariam vim Spiritus Sancti*, as Tertullian calls it, "by sending the Holy Ghost as his "deputy," for the managing of this work, and the propagating and establishing of that religion which he had planted in the world.

God foresaw that the greatest part of the Jewish nation would reject Christ and his doctrine, and that they would put him to death as a deceiver and impostor; and because it was expedient that there should be such an expiatory sacrifice for sin, and that *one man should die for all men*, God was willing to permit his Son to be thus dishonourably and unjustly treated, and *by wicked hands to be crucified and slain*; because he knew very well how to make the malice of men subservient to his own gracious purpose and design: but yet he was not willing that so much innocency and goodness should always ly under this reproach; from which if he had not been vindicated, the design of the gospel had fallen to the ground, and presently come to nothing: and therefore as a reward of his obedience and submission to the will of God in these dreadful sufferings, in this cruel and dishonourable usage, God furnished him with this means of vindicating himself and his doctrine; he gave him power to send his holy Spirit into the world, who should distribute miraculous gifts among his Apostles and followers, that so both he and his doctrine might be effectually vindicated to the world, and a way made for the more speedy spreading and propagating of it.

So that we plainly see that the wisdom of God had so

ſo ordered this whole diſpenſation, that every part of it, the birth, the life, and death, and reſurrection, and aſcenſion of our Lord, and the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt, are all ſubſervient to one another, and to the whole deſign, *viz.* the reformation and ſalvation of mankind.

I have done with the firſt thing I propounded, the neceſſity of Chriſt's leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghoſt. I ſhall now proceed to the

Second thing I propoſed, the happy conſequence and effects of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt. *When he is come, he will reprove the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.* There is a great difficulty in theſe words, and therefore I ſhall endeavour, as well as I can, to explain them, and then draw ſome uſeful inferences from the main doctrine contained in them.

For the explication of them. *And when he,* that is, the Holy Ghoſt, the Advocate mentioned before, *ſhall come,* that is, when the promiſe of the Father concerning the coming of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles ſhall be accompliſhed, *he ſhall reprove the world.* The word is ἐλέγξει, which I think may much more properly be rendered *convince, he ſhall convince the world:* and ſo it is uſed by this Evangeliſt, John viii. 46. *Which of you,* ſays our Saviour, *convinceth me of ſin?* the very phraſe uſed in the text, *He ſhall convince the world of ſin.* And the ſame word is alſo uſed in the ſame ſenſe by St. Paul, Tit. i. 9. ἐλέγχειν ἀντιλέγοντας, *to convince gainſayers.* And this certainly is much more agreeable to the ſcope of this place. For though *to reprove the world of ſin* be a current expreſſion, *yet to reprove the world of righteouſneſs and of judgment* are very hard phraſes, and, I doubt not, intelligible; but to convince an adverſary, or to ſatisfy a court, of the falſhood of the accuſation and charge brought againſt the party accuſed, that is to vindicate and juſtify him in his cauſe, this is the proper act of an advocate.

So that the great end of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, who is here called the Advocate, is to *convince the world. He ſhall convince the world,* that is, both Jews and Gentiles, who joined in their enmity againſt Chriſt, and agreed to put him to death, in theſe three points, *concerning ſin, and righteouſneſs and judgment.* The expreſſion

preſſion is ſhort, and ſomewhat obſcure, and ſeems (as Grotius and other learned men have not improbably thought) to allude to the three ſorts of cauſes and actions among the Jews.

In the firſt, to public actions concerning criminal matters, among which was the caſe of believing or rejecting Prophets. *He ſhall convince the world of ſin, becauſe they believed not in me*; that is, he ſhall convince the world that he was a true Prophet ſent from God, and no impoſtor; and conſequently that they were guilty of a great contempt of God, and a horrible murder in putting me to death.

In the ſecond, there ſeems to be an alluſion to that ſort of private actions which referred to the vindicating of innocency from falſe teſtimony and accuſation, which are called by the name of righteouſneſs. *He ſhall convince the world of righteouſneſs.*

In the third, to that ſort of actions, which referred to the vindication and puniſhment of injuries, by way of retaliation upon him that did the injury, which are called κρίσεις, or *judgments*. *He ſhall convince the world of judgment, becauſe the Prince of this world is judged.*

But to explain theſe things more particularly:

1. *He ſhall convince the world of ſin, becauſe they believe not on me*; that is, of the great ſin they were guilty of in rejecting this great Prophet, and condemning him as a ſeducer and impoſtor. And of this they would remarkably be convinced, when they ſhould ſee the predictions of Chriſt fulfilled, particularly that of ſending the Holy Ghoſt, and of that terrible vengeance which ſhould afterwards be executed on the Jewiſh nation for rejecting the Son of God. The firſt of theſe we find eminently fulfilled upon the coming of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles on the day of Pentecoſt, Acts ii. For when the Apoſtles by a ſudden inſpiration ſpake with other tongues, the Jews, and proſelytes, who ſaw and heard them, were very much amazed at it, ver. 7. and from this miraculous power of the Holy Ghoſt, ſo viſible upon them, St. Peter takes occaſion to convince the Jews of their great ſin in rejecting the Meſſias, and putting him to death, ver. 32. 33. *This Jeſus*, ſaith he, *hath God raiſed up, whereof we are all witneſſes: where-*

wherefore being by the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, he hath ſhed forth this which ye now ſee and hear. From whence he concludes, ver. 36. *Therefore let all the houſe of Iſrael know aſſuredly, that God hath made that ſame Jeſus whom ye crucified both Lord and Chriſt:* that is, by this ye may be convinced, that he whom ye crucified as a falſe prophet, was the true Meſſias. Upon this we find, ver. 37. that *when the Jews heard this, they were pricked at their hearts, and ſaid unto Peter, and the reſt of the apoſtles, Men and brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?* Thus you ſee the firſt effect which our Saviour foretold of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt fulfilled in a moſt eminent manner; for upon this ſermon, three thouſand of the Jews being *convinced of their great ſin, in not believing on him, were baptized in his name.*

2. *He ſhall convince the world of righteouſneſs*; that is, of the innocency of that holy and juſt perſon, whom they had condemned as a malefactor. *Of righteouſneſs, becauſe I go to the Father*; that is, this ſhall be an evidence to the world of my innocency of thoſe crimes with which I was charged, that I am taken up into heaven, and ſeated at the right-hand of God, where I ſhall remain for ever, out of the reach of their malice and injury. *Becauſe I go to the Father, and ye ſee me no more*; that is, I ſhall be there where their malice cannot reach me. For ſo he tells the Phariſees, when they came to apprehend him, John vii. 33, 34. *Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that ſent me: ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*

And this vindication of his innocency was begun by the miracles which immediately followed his death, upon which *the centurion glorified God*, ſaying, *Certainly this was the Son of God*, as St. Matthew hath it; or as St. Luke, *this was a righteous man*, Luke xxiii. 47. And not only the centurion, but all the people, ver. 48. *And all the people that came together to that ſight, beholding the things which were done, ſmote their breaſts, and returned.* But the great vindication of his innocency was his reſurrection, which delivered him from that unjuſt

just sentence of death which was past upon him, by raising him up to life again. And this is particularly ascribed to the Holy Ghost, Rom. i. 4. *And was mightily demonstrated to be the Son of God, by the Spirit of holiness, in his resurrection from the dead.* Especially if we consider, that he was afterwards taken up visibly into heaven, and there invested with royal power and dignity; of which he gave plentiful evidence, in the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, poured forth upon the Apostles: which was a standing demonstration to the world of his innocency and righteousness, since God hath taken him up to himself, and *set him at his own right-hand, and committed all power to him in heaven and earth*

3. *He shall convince the world of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged.* He that usurped the authority of God in the world, and by his instruments had procured Christ to be condemned as a counterfeit King, is himself dethroned and condemned; *The Prince of this world is judged.* He that thought to have destroyed the Son of God by putting him to death, is by this very means destroyed himself. So the Apostle tells us, Heb. ii. 14. that *Christ through his death*, that is, upon occasion of his death, and his resurrection from the dead consequent upon it, *hath destroyed him that had the power of death*, that is, the devil.

But most remarkably was the Prince of this world judged and cast out, when after he had so long usurped the name and worship of God in the world, he was, by that mighty power of the Spirit of God which accompanied the preaching of the gospel, thrown out of his kingdom; and where-ever the doctrine of Christ came, the idolatry of the world was not able to stand before it, but fell down, like *Dagon before the ark.* And that this is the meaning of judgment here, is plain from the same Evangelist, chap. xii. 31. 32. *Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the Prince of this world be cast out. And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.* Where our Saviour explains the *judgment of this world*, by the *casting out Satan* out of that power and authority which he had usurped in the heathen world by his idolatrous worship: And therefore our Saviour foretells, that *when he was lifted*

up

up from the earth, that is, after he was crucified, and raiſed from the dead, and taken up into heaven, he *would draw all men to him;* that is, his religion ſhould prevail wonderfully in the world, and be entertained in all nations. And this was moſt remarkably accompliſhed, by the wonderful progreſs of the goſpel, and ſpeedy downfall of idolatry in the world, *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.* The acknowledgment of Porphyry, that bitter enemy of Chriſtianity, as it is reported to us by Euſebius, is very remarkable, "That ſince one Jeſus began to be worſhipped, they found no public benefit from their gods: "their miracles and their oracles ceaſed." This our Saviour foreſaw, and foretold, when he appointed and ſent forth the ſeventy diſciples to preach the goſpel, Luke x. 18. *I beheld Satan like lightning to fall from heaven*, to expreſs to us the ſudden demoliſhing of his kingdom, and the quick and ſpeedy overthrow of idolatry in the world. And thus I have explained, as briefly as I could, this difficult paſſage, concerning the Holy Ghoſt's *convincing the world of ſin, of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.*

I ſhall only draw two or three inferences from what hath been delivered, and ſo conclude.

I. We have great reaſon to adore the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in the diſpenſation of the goſpel; that by the ſending down of his holy Spirit, to endow the firſt publiſhers of his heavenly doctrine with ſuch miraculous powers and gifts, he hath given ſuch abundant teſtimony to the truth of our religion, and ſuch firm grounds for our faith to rely upon. Had God left the Chriſtian religion to have been propagated only by its own rational force upon the minds of men, what a ſlow progreſs would it in all probability have made? How little belief would the Apoſtles naked teſtimony of our Lord's reſurrection from the dead, without any other demonſtration or proof, have gained while they were alive, much leſs after their death? How unable would their doctrine, deſtitute of divine teſtimony, as well as of all human advantages, have been to have conteſted with the luſts and intereſts of men, the wit of the philoſophers, and the powers of the Princes of this world, which

all

all set themselves against it? How could it, with any hope of success, have encountered the malice of men and devils, which was so active and busy, by all possible violence, and by all imaginable arts, to root it out of the world? Had the Apostles of our Lord only gone forth, in the strength of their own interest and eloquence, (which in poor and unlearned men must needs be very small) how little could they have contributed to the carrying on of so great and difficult a work? Nay, had they not been supported, and born up in their spirits by a mighty strength above their own; had not their commission been sealed by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, which upon all occasions shewed forth itself in them, to the wonder and astonishment of men, and was a testimony from heaven to them, that they were the ambassadors of God to men, especially impowered and commissioned by him for that work; they could not but have been discouraged by the opposition and difficulties they met withal, and they might with Moses have declined the service, and desired God to send his message by others that were fitter and better qualified to deliver it; and, after some vain and unsuccessful attempts to propagate the belief of their doctrine, they would have given it over, and been ashamed of their rash undertaking. So St Paul intimates, that had not the mighty power of God accompanied their preaching, and made it effectual to the conversion and salvation of men, they would have been tempted to have been *ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

But then we must remember, that it is the doctrine of Christ which is thus confirmed, and not the doctrines and traditions of men. For had the concealment of the doctrine of Christ, and the serving of God in an unknown tongue, been any part of the Apostles doctrine, the gift of tongues had not been a confirmation of this doctrine, but a contradiction to it: had they preached transubstantiation, and the renouncing of our senses, in order to the belief of it, miracles could have given no credit to it: for that which depends upon the certainty of sense, as miracles do, cannot be a competent argument to prove that which is contrary to sense; for that which makes me sure of the miracle which

ſhould prove this doctrine, does at the ſame time make me equally ſure that this doctrine is not true. If there were no other evidence, that tranſubſtantiation is no part of the Chriſtian doctrine, this to a wiſe man would be ſufficient, that what proves the one, overthrows the other; and that miracles, which are certainly the beſt and higheſt external proof of Chriſtianity, are the worſt proof in the world of tranſubſtantiation, unleſs a man can renounce his ſenſes at the ſame time that he relies upon them; for a man cannot believe a miracle without relying upon his ſenſes, nor tranſubſtantiation without renouncing them: and never were any two things ſo ill coupled together, as the doctrine of Chriſtianity, and that of tranſubſtantiation, becauſe they draw ſeveral ways, and are ready to ſtrangle one another. The main evidence and confirmation of the Chriſtian doctrine, which is miracles, is reſolved into the certainty and teſtimony of our ſenſes; but this evidence is clear and point blank againſt tranſubſtantiation.

2. The conſideration of what hath been ſaid convinceth men of the great ſin of infidelity, and the unreaſonableneſs of it, after ſo clear conviction and demonſtration as God hath given to the world of the truth of Chriſtianity. That the goſpel was planted and propagated in the world in ſo wonderful a manner, and prevailed, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition that was made againſt it: the remarkable and terrible deſtruction of Jeruſalem according to our Saviour's prediction: the ſeveral attempts of rebuilding the temple, particularly by Julian the Apoſtate, in deſpite of Chriſtianity, and to confute our Saviour's prediction, ſo remarkably fruſtrated, and reſiſted from heaven, by fire flaming out of the foundation, and conſuming the workmen, ſo that they were forced to deſiſt; and this recorded by a Heathen hiſtorian Ammianus Marcellinus: the diſperſion of the Jewiſh nation, and their continuing for ſo many ages ſeparate and diſtinct from all other people, for a ſtanding accompliſhment of our Saviour's prophecy, and a teſtimony to all ages of the truth of Chriſtianity: theſe, with many more arguments I might mention, are a clear evidence to any one that does not abſolutely wink and ſhut his eyes againſt the

the light, that the doctrine of Christianity came from God.

3. They who believe the gospel are inexcusable if they do not obey it, and live according to it. This is the great end of all the miracles which God hath wrought for the confirmation of Christianity; that, by the belief of the gospel, men might be brought *to the obedience of faith*, and live conformably to the precepts of that holy religion, which the Son of God, by so many miracles, hath planted and preserved in the world. The infidelity of men will be a heavy charge upon them at the judgment of the great day, and God will condemn them for it: but we that profess to believe the gospel, and live contrary to it, shall not only be condemned by the judgment of God, but by the sentence of our own consciences. Our profession to believe the gospel will be an aggravation of our disobedience to it, and every article of our creed will be a sore charge against us; and that faith, which was ordained to justify us, will be our great condemnation at the great day.

Therefore, as the Apostle to the Hebrews, argues, *we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we fall away*, either by infidelity, or impiety of life: *for if the word spoken by angels was stedfast*, that is, if disobedience to the law of Moses was so severely punished, *and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which was at first spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed afterwards by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. For if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowlege of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. For how much sorer punishment shall we be thought worthy, if we tread under foot the Son of God; and count the blood of the covenant, whereby we are sanctified, an unholy thing, and offer despite to the Spirit of grace! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

But, beloved, I hope better things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation, though I thus ſpeak, and that you are not of the number of thoſe who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the ſaving of your ſouls.

SERMON CXCIX.

Of the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, as a guide to the Apoſtles.

JOHN xvi. 12. 13.

I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

OUR Saviour having before declared to his diſciples the great expediency of his leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, ver. 7. he tells them, in the next place, what the office of the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be. In reference to Chriſt, he ſhould be an advocate; and in reference to them, he ſhould be a guide or teacher.

1. In reference to Chriſt, he ſhould be an advocate to plead the cauſe of Chriſt and of his doctrine, and to vindicate them to the world, ver. 8. 9. 10. 11. *And when he is come, he will convince the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment. Of ſin, becauſe they believed not in me: of righteouſneſs, becauſe I go to my Father, and ye ſee me no more: of judgment, becauſe the Prince of this world is judged.* All which I have formerly handled and explained at large.

2. In regard to the Apoſtles; the Holy Ghoſt is promiſed to be a guide and teacher, to reveal to them, and to inſtruct them in ſome truths which our Saviour, whilſt he was with them, had not ſo fully acquainted them withal, becauſe of their preſent incapacity and unfitneſs at that time to receive them. *I have many things to ſay unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he,*

he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall do theſe two things:

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to explain the meaning of them.

Secondly, I ſhall draw ſome inferences from them.

Firſt, I ſhall begin with the explication of them; in order whereunto, it will be requiſite to enquire into theſe two things:

I. What thoſe things probably were, which our Saviour did not reveal and declare unto his diſciples, becauſe they could not then bear them.

II. What is the meaning of this promiſe, that *the Spirit of truth ſhall guide them into all truth*

I. What thoſe things probably were, which our Saviour did not reveal and declare to his diſciples, becauſe they could not then bear them. Our Saviour does not expreſs particularly what thoſe things were, nor can it be expected he ſhould have done ſo; for then he had declared them to them, which he tells them he would not do: but the text gives us two marks to direct our enquiry concerning them.

1. That they were ſuch things as the diſciples at that time were incapable of. *I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* So that it ſeems they were ſuch truths as the diſciples were prejudiced againſt upon ſome account or other; moſt probably by reaſon of their education in the Jewiſh religion, and ſome principles which they had imbibed from the teachers and interpreters of their law.

2. They were ſuch truths as, after the Holy Ghoſt did deſcend upon them, they ſhould be inſtructed in. So that if we can find out what thoſe truths were which the diſciples were fully inſtructed in after the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, which either were not all, or not ſo clearly revealed to them before, becauſe of their prejudice againſt them, we may then certainly conclude, that theſe were the things which our Saviour here ſpeaks of, when he ſays, *I have many things to ſay unto you, but you cannot bear them now.*

And upon enquiry into this matter by theſe two

marks, it will appear, that they were principally theſe three.

1. That our Saviour did not deſign the ſetting up of any temporal kingdom in this world; but that his kingdom and government was to be ſpiritual, not managed by any external force or compulſion, or by laws, the violation whereof he would vindicate by the temporal ſword; but by laws, the ſanction and penalty whereof ſhould take hold of the minds and ſpirits of men, and relate unto another world.

And this was a truth which the diſciples were incapable of, whilſt our Saviour was here upon earth; againſt which they were ſo prejudiſed by the general tradition which the Jews had entertained, that the Meſſias was to be a great temporal prince, and to ſubdue all nations to them; and that they were in a continual expectation, when he would lay aſide his mean condition, and appear in that glory and majeſty which they expected; when like the ſun he would break through all thoſe clouds wherewith he was muffled and obſcured, and ſhine forth in his full ſtrength and glory. For it appears very plain, that they had an hankering expectation after ſome ſuch thing, and that after he had ſo plainly declared to them his death and ſufferings. For the text tells us, that *they could not underſtand theſe things but they were hid from them*; that is, they were ſo poſſeſſed with the conceit of his temporal kingdom, that they could not imagine that any ſuch thing could befal him. And to ſhew how deeply this conceit was rooted in them, immediately after Chriſt had told them ſo plainly of his ſufferings, James and John put up a petition to him, that one of them might ſit on his right-hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom. This opinion of his temporal kingdom did ſo run in their minds, that they could not underſtand any thing that ſeemed to contradict it

And though our Saviour had ſo expreſly declared, but a little before his death, *that his kingdom was not of this world*, and therefore he ſhould make no reſiſtance to the violence that was offered to him, yea, though the diſciples ſaw him put to death, yet they did not lay aſide this opinion, but ſtill expected that he would

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rise again, and then begin his kingdom in this world. For so we find the two disciples discoursing together, as they were going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 21. *We trusted*, say they one to another, *that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.* And after his resurrection, this was that which lay uppermost in their minds, and which their thoughts were still upon, as appears by that question which they put to him just before his ascension, as St Luke tells us, Acts i. 6. *When therefore they were come together, they asked of him, saying, Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*

No wonder then, if being possessed with so strong a prejudice about this matter, our Saviour did not strive to convince them of it, whilst he was upon earth; because they could not then have born it; but we find that after the coming of the Holy Ghost, they were fully instructed in it, and quitted the conceit which they formerly entertained, and were satisfied that he was ascended into heaven, and set at the right-hand of the majesty of God, and that from thence he had sent his Spirit to instruct and govern his church, and that this was the kingdom of the Messias.

They were so possessed before with another apprehension, that they would almost have rejected him, had they understood that the Messias was to have no other kingdom than this: but after that glorious confirmation was given to him, by his resurrection from the dead, and visible ascension into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost in such wonderful and miraculous gifts, then at last they were capable of understanding and receiving this truth, which could not sink into their hearts before.

2. Another truth which our Saviour here probably intended, was the abrogating the Jewish dispensation. And this likewise they must needs be extremely prejudised against; because their law was given by God, and looked upon by them, not as a temporary, but a perpetual institution. And this truth we find that the Apostles were afterwards instructed in, when the Holy Ghost was come upon them. And therefore in the council at Jerusalem, the Apostles released the Gentiles

tiles from the obſervance of Moſes his law, as a thing which they were perfectly inſtructed in by the Holy Ghoſt. Acts xv. 28. *It hath ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to us,* &c.

3. Another truth which our Saviour probably here intended, was, that the ſalvation of the Meſſias belonged to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews. The Jews had a ſtrong conceit of their own privileges, and looked upon all the world, beſides themſelves, as a company of reprobates, that had no ſhare or intereſt in the promiſe of God, or in thoſe great bleſſings which their Meſſias was to bring to the world. And we find that the diſciples had ſo deeply imbibed this prejudice in their education, that they wondered at our Saviour, when they found him talking with the Samaritan woman. And though before his aſcenſion he had given them an expreſs command to go and teach all nations, yet it ſeems it was a good while before they underſtood this command in the latitude in which our Saviour intended it. For it is plain from the hiſtory of the Acts, that till Peter was ſent to Cornelius, and better inſtructed in this matter by a viſion from heaven, they had not at all preached the goſpel to the Gentiles, being perſwaded that it was unlawful to do it; but by the command of our Saviour to go and teach all nations, they underſtood that they were to preach to the Jews diſperſed in all nations. But after this viſion to Peter, and when they ſaw that the Holy Ghoſt fell upon the Gentiles in the ſame manner that it had done upon them, then and not before they were inſtructed in this truth.

That theſe are all, or ſome of the principal of thoſe truths which our Saviour here means, when he ſays, that he had yet many things to ſay unto his diſciples, which they could not then bear, does, I hope, ſufficiently appear; becauſe they were ſuch truths as the diſciples were moſt vehemently prejudiſed againſt, and which afterwards they were fully inſtructed in by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, and not before.

II. I ſhall enquire what is the meaning of this promiſe in the text, that *the Spirit of truth will guide them into all truth.*

That theſe words are not to be underſtood in the greateſt

greateſt latitude which they are capable of, I think any one will grant For certainly no man ever ſuppoſed, that our Saviour here promiſed that his Spirit ſhould lead his diſciples into the knowledge of all natural truths, and inſtruct them in all the depths of philoſophy, and in the myſteries of all arts and ſciences. Plain it is then, that ſome limitation muſt be put upon this general and univerſal promiſe of *leading them into all truth.* All the difficulty is, how far it is to be limited, and what bounds are to be ſet to this general promiſe?

Now in all reaſon it ought to be limited by the context; and if we go that way, which is the only reaſonable way of limiting general words, then the plain meaning of this promiſe will be this; that becauſe our Saviour had forborn to reveal ſeveral truths to his diſciples, which they were not then capable of, he would ſupply this difficulty afterwards by his holy Spirit, who after that he was riſen from the dead, and aſcended into heaven, ſhould deſcend upon them, and inſtruct them fully in thoſe truths which he, in condeſcenſion to their prejudice and incapacity, had in his life-time forborn to do; that is, he would take a fitter ſeaſon to inſtruct them fully by his Spirit in all thoſe truths which, whilſt he was upon earth, they were not ſo capable of receiving. *I have yet many things to ſay unto you;* that is, beſides what I have already declared to you, there are ſeveral other things, which ye are not now ſo capable of receiving, which the Holy Ghoſt, whom I will ſend in my name, ſhall take a more convenient time to inſtruct you in.

And our Saviour ſpeaks much to the ſame purpoſe, John xiv. 25. 26. *Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, being yet preſent with you: But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my name, he will teach you all things;* that is, He ſhall make up and ſupply what is wanting and inſtruct you in thoſe things which ye are not now ſo capable of receiving.

I ſhall now, in the ſecond place, make ſome inferences from the words thus explained. As,

Firſt, That it is not neceſſary at all times to preach all

all truths, which are of importance to be known †. For theſe were great truths which our Saviour forbore for ſome time to reveal to his diſciples, and were of great importance to the planting and propagating of the goſpel; and yet he thought it better at preſent to forbear the preſſing of them, than by an unſeaſonable declaration of them to do no good, but only to ſtir up prejudice againſt himſelf, and thoſe other neceſſary truths which he had inſtructed them in.

Secondly, That there ought to be due regard to what the people can bear; and where men are poſſeſſed with a violent prejudice againſt ſome truths, we ought, in imitation of our Saviour's example, patiently to expect and endeavour the removal of that prejudice; and firſt to apply all fitting means for the conquering and ſubduing it, before we expoſe truth to be rejected by thoſe who have taken up a violent prejudice againſt it. And this rule holds univerſally, where we have to deal with perſons who are tractable and willing to learn, but do at preſently under ſome prejudice of education, or ſome falſe principles which they entertained unawares, which by time and patience, and a gradual progreſs of truth, may be removed, but are not to be conquered and born down at once. There are ſome prejudices which cannot be plucked out of the minds of men at once, but yet may be ſo looſened by degrees, that they will fall off of themſelves; as there are many knots untied with patience and leiſure, which by a violent pulling are fixed ſo much the faſter.

And this courſe we find the Apoſtles took, in imitation of our Saviour, 1 Cor. iii. 2. *I have fed you*, ſaith St. Paul there, *with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.* He was contented to inſtil truth into them by degrees, and as they were capable of it. The minds of moſt men are ſtrait and narrow, and cannot receive that at once, which may be inſtilled by degrees: like narrow-mouthed veſſels, into which liquor may be poured by degrees; but if we ſtrive to put it in faſter than they can receive it, it runs by, and is loſt.

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† *Utile eſt ut taceatur aliquod verum, propter incapaces.* Aug perſever. l. ii. c. 16.

But where men are not of a teachable diſpoſition, but the prejudice againſt truth is wilful and affected, there we are bound to propoſe great and important truths to men, notwithſtanding their prejudice againſt them, and to urge upon them thoſe things which are neceſſary and fit for them to know, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. And if in that caſe they will reſiſt truth fairly and with full evidence propoſed to them, they do it at their peril. God is not obliged to do more, than to offer men ſufficient means of conviction; and if they will be obſtinate and pertinacious, God is not bound in that caſe to provide any farther remedy.

Thirdly, Another inference, and which I principally intended from this text, is this, That from the explication which I have given of this promiſe of our Saviour's, of ſending his Spirit to lead his diſciples into all truth, it very plainly appears, that there is no ground or colour of ground from this text, for the pretended infallibility of the Romiſh church: And yet this is one of thoſe texts which their great maſters of controverſy do urge us withal, for the proof of their infalliblity; a ſign that they are much at a loſs for good arguments to prove it by, otherwiſe they would never ſummon a text ſo very remote from their purpoſe. And how far this text is from proving their church to be infallible, will very clearly appear, if we conſider theſe five things.

1. That the plain and obvious ſenſe of this promiſe, as I have already ſhewn, is this; that becauſe there were ſome truths fit for the Apoſtles to know, which they were not at that time capable of receiving, whilſt our Saviour was upon earth, therefore after his aſcenſion he would ſend his holy Spirit to inſtruct them in thoſe things, and to guide them into all thoſe truths, which it was not then ſeaſonable to acquaint them withal. Now by what art can any man infer from hence, that our Saviour would give the infallible aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit to the church of Rome, to the end of the world?

2. Let it alſo be conſidered, that this promiſe was made perſonally to the Apoſtles, and therefore ought not to be extended beyond them, unleſs it evidently appear,

appear, that it ought to be ſo extended; unleſs it evidently appear, either from the tenor of the promiſe, or from ſome other reaſon, that it was the intention of the promiſer, that this ſhould equally extend to others as well as to them. It is true, that this promiſe was made to the Apoſtles, not merely for their own ſakes, but for the benefit of the church; for God thereby promiſeth, that his Spirit ſhould reveal thoſe truths to them, that they might declare them to the church: But it does not from hence follow, that any other perſons, in ſucceeding ages of the church, ſhould have the ſame immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt which the Apoſtles had; becauſe, being once revealed to the church, there was no need of a new revelation of thoſe truths in every age.

3. There is nothing in the tenor of this promiſe, nor any other reaſon, from whence it may appear, that this promiſe ought to be extended any farther than to the perſons to whom it was made; becauſe this promiſe was made with a peculiar reſpect to the Apoſtles, and their employment, and for reaſons proper to the firſt ſtate of the church, and not common to all ages; therefore it cannot with reaſon be extended to all after-ages of the church.

Let it be granted then, that this promiſe, taken together with other promiſes of our Saviour made to the Apoſtles, does ſignify an infallible aſſiſtance to them, ſo as to ſecure them from error, in the delivery of the doctrine of Chriſt; yet why ſhould any church afterwards, much leſs the church of Rome apart from all others, pretend to be the heir-general to the Apoſtles in this infallible aſſiſtance? The Apoſtles gave ſufficient evidence of their infallibility, by the miracles which they wrought: and let the Pope and general councils give this teſtimony of their infallibility, and we are ready to acknowledge it. There was reaſon why this aſſiſtance ſhould be afforded to the Apoſtles in the firſt preaching of the goſpel; but after it was planted, and the doctrine of Chriſtianity conſigned to writing, there was no need of ſuch an infallible aſſiſtance afterwards.

But they of the church of Rome tell us, that this infallible aſſiſtance was neceſſary afterwards for the perpetuity of the church, and for the government of it,

and

and for the deciſion of controverſies amongſt Chriſtians. To this I anſwer two things:

Firſt, If this infallible aſſiſtance be neceſſary to theſe ends, then it is alſo neceſſary, that it ſhould have been declared what that church or ſociety is which was to be ſo infallible; elſe how would men know, whither to have recourſe for the government of the church, and the deciſion of controverſies in matters of difficulty? As good the Chriſtian church be without infallibility, as that no man ſhould know where it is.

And will any man have the confidence to ſay, that God hath any where in ſcripture declared, that the church of Rome hath this infallibility annexed to her? Hath the ſcripture any where told us, that the church of Rome is the catholic church, that is, that a particular church is the church univerſal? If we ſhould ſuppoſe the univerſal church to be infallible in matters of faith and practice, is it any where ſaid in the bible, that the Pope, or a general council, or both together, are infallible? Are we any where there directed to have recourſe to Rome, and the Biſhop of that city, either with or without a general council, for the determination of controverſies in religion? And yet if infallibility be neceſſary for the ends mentioned, then certainly it is as neceſſary that we ſhould have been plainly directed where to find it, that we may make uſe of it upon occaſion. What man living can perſuade himſelf, that the belief of the infallibility of the Romiſh church, that is, of the Pope, or of the Pope and council, ſhould be ſo fundamental an article of faith as they would make it; and yet that neither Chriſt nor his Apoſtles ſhould ſay one word about it? How comes it to paſs, that when there were ſo many ſchiſms and diſſentions in the primitive church, St Paul ſhould never ſo much as once mention this effectual remedy of all thoſe evils, to ſend them to St Peter, who was the only infallible judge of controverſies? If Chriſt had appointed this way, then certainly St Paul could not have been ignorant of it. Beſides that, it would have been an excellent direction to the church in after ages, what to have done in the like caſes, if our Saviour or any of his Apoſtles would have given us the leaſt ſignification,

that the heir of infallibility had been fixed at Rome, and that thither we are to have recourse for the deciding of all the differences in religion.

Especially it must needs seem very wonderful, that St Paul, in his epistle to the Roman church, should not acquaint them what a singular privilege that church had above all other churches, that it was the seat of infallibility, and that the bishop of that church was the great judge of controversies, and that there could no difference arise among them, about any matter of faith, but they might speedily have it decided from that chair. Nay, on the contrary, there are shrewd intimations given, that the church of Rome herself should apostatize from the faith, and that her haughtiness would be her ruin, Rom. xi. 20. 21. where speaking of the Jews, that were *broken off by their unbelief*, he gives this caution to the church of Rome, *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches; take heed lest he also spare not thee. Be not high-minded, but fear.* What needed they to fear, who had the privilege of infallibility? Their faith must needs be unshaken. But St Paul seems to think that church to be in as much danger of falling from the faith, as any other. From whence we may certainly conclude, that he knew nothing of its infallibility. Nay, he seems to have foreseen their arrogant pretence to it, and that that very thing would be the occasion of their falling, when he gives them that caution, *Be not high-minded, but fear.* For what greater instance could there possibly be of a proud and high mind, than to assume to themselves to be infallible? But,

Secondly, The ends mentioned may be sufficiently attained without infallibility. As for the perpetuity of the church, that may continue to the end of the world, by virtue of the infallibility of Christ's promise, though there be no infallibility either in the church of Rome, or any where else. For setting aside Christ's promise, the church may fail; and his promise signifies only that it shall not fail, not that it cannot. All that can be inferred from the promise of Christ, concerning the perpetuity of the church, is only the certainty of the event,

vent, but not the infallibility of the cauſe; not that the church ſhall be infallible, but only that it ſhall not fail.

In like manner for the government of the church, and deciſion of controverſies, there is no need of infallibility; becauſe the church may be governed well enough, as other ſocieties are, without an infallibility: and all controverſies that are neceſſary to be decided, may be decided by the infallible rule of faith, the holy ſcriptures, which are plain in all things neceſſary; and there is no neceſſity that controverſies about matters not neceſſary ſhould be decided.

To conclude this point; if the Pope and a general council be the ſeat of infallibility, (which is the moſt general opinion in the church of Rome) then how was the Chriſtian church governed, and controverſies decided, before the council of Nice, which was the firſt general council; that is, for three hundred years? And if the church did well enough for three hundred years without an infallible judge, this is a demonſtration that there is no abſolute need of it.

4. This promiſe here in the text ſignifies a revelation of ſome new truths to the Apoſtles, which they were not inſtructed in before, and therefore cannot belong to any church in after-ages. For the church of Rome herſelf does not pretend to any revelation of objects of faith not known before, and therefore can challenge nothing by virtue of this promiſe.

5. Suppoſe infallible aſſiſtance were here promiſed to the church in all ages, and that the church of Rome were the catholic church, and that the Pope and a council were the Roman church. and conſequently the catholic, I ſay, ſuppoſe all this granted; yet the church of Rome, according to her principles, can never be certain that this is the meaning of this promiſe For they profeſs to receive both the ſcripture and the interpretation of it from the church, and conſequently to believe this text to be ſcripture, and this to be the meaning of this text, becauſe their church which is infallible tells them ſo: and if ſo, then they do not believe their church to be infallible, becauſe this text ſays ſo; but they believe this to be the meaning of this text, becauſe their church

is infallible, and tells them so. So that of necessity they must first believe their church to be infallible, before they can prove it from this or any other text; and consequently they must either prove things in a circle, or else take the meaning of this text of the infallibility of their church for granted, without any proof. And this much may suffice to have spoken to this text.

SERMON CC.

Of the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost on the minds of Christians.

JOHN vii. 39.

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

The first sermon on this text.

OUR blessed Saviour (who used from all sorts of objects and occurrences to discourse of heavenly and spiritual things) being present at the feast of tabernacles, in which it was the custom of the Jews, from the fountain of Siloam, to fetch water with great pomp and ceremony, and to bring it into the temple with sound of trumpet, and to offer it, singing those words of the Prophet Isaiah, *They shall draw waters with joy out of the wells of salvation:* I say, our Saviour being present at this feast, takes occasion from these waters, which they brought into the temple with so much joy, to proclaim those spiritual benefits which Christians should be made partakers of by the Holy Ghost, and which are in scripture represented by *waters flowing from a living fountain. In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture saith,* that is, according to the tenor

tenor of ſeveral paſſages in the Prophets, *out of his belly ſhall flow rivers of living water:* and then the Evangeliſt adds, by way of farther explication of our Saviour's meaning, *But this he ſpake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him ſhould receive. For the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified.* In which words we have theſe three things conſiderable.

Firſt, The gift itſelf, which is here called *the Spirit*, or *the Holy Ghoſt*.

Secondly, The perſons upon whom this gift was to be conferred; and thoſe are believers, ſuch as ſhould believe and embrace the goſpel. *This he ſpake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him ſhould receive.*

Thirdly, The particular time and ſeaſon of the firſt conferring of this gift: and this was not to be till after our Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven, and being received up into glory, implied in thoſe words, *The Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified.* I ſhall as briefly as I can explain theſe three things.

Firſt, The gift itſelf, which is here called *the Spirit*, or *the Holy Ghoſt*. By which we are to underſtand a ſpecial power and preſence of the Holy Ghoſt with believers, the immediate operation and aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit communicated and imparted to them; and this comprehends in it theſe two things.

1. Thoſe extraordinary and miraculous gifts which were beſtowed upon the Apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians, in order to the planting and propagating of the Chriſtian religion in the world, and for the uſe and benefit of the church, while it was under perſecution, and deſtitute of all ſecular countenance and aſſiſtance, and of thoſe ordinary human advantages which are ſufficient to preſerve and maintain a religion, after it is once firmly ſettled, and generally entertained. And theſe gifts were in a very remarkable manner, and ſuch as no religion that ever was in the world can pretend to the like, conferred upon the firſt preachers of the Chriſtian doctrine, and planters of it in the world; and they were in a high degree neceſſary to give credit and countenance to this religion at its firſt appearance, and to awaken the drowſy world to an attentive conſideration

of it, to conquer the prejudices of men againſt a new religion, and to ſupport and bear up the teachers and publiſhers of this doctrine againſt that violent oppoſition and perſecution which would certainly be raiſed againſt it, and likewiſe to ſupply the want of ſecular power and authority to give countenance and aſſiſtance to it.

For theſe, and ſuch like ends and reaſons, God was pleaſed, at that time, not only to endow the apoſtles and firſt preachers of Chriſtianity with all ſorts of miraculous powers, but even the generality of Chriſtians with ſeveral extraordinary gifts; and alſo to accompany the outward preaching of the goſpel with a very extraordinary influence of God's Spirit upon the minds of men; to make way for the entertainment of it, by opening their underſtandings, and enlightening their minds to diſcern ſpiritual things, by ſubduing their prejudices, and conquering their luſts, and the vitious and perverſe inclinations of their wills, to the obedience of faith, by raiſing their minds above the world, above all the allurements and enjoyments of it, and above all the threatnings and terrors of it, and giving men courage and reſolution to embrace this profeſſion, and with conſtancy to adhere to it, notwithſtanding all the dangers and ſufferings which attend it.

I ſhall not now treat of theſe miraculous gifts particularly, having had frequent occaſion heretofore *. to diſcourſe at large of the nature, and ſeveral kinds, and particular uſe and ends of them. I ſhall only obſerve to you, that this power of miracles, and this extraordinary influence of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, was not intended always to continue in the church, but only ſo long as there ſhould be need and occaſion for it, that is, till the Chriſtian religion was fully propagated and planted, and the fury of perſecution abated, and till Chriſtianity had the favour and countenance of the civil authority, and the prejudice of education, on its ſide. For when, by this means, it came to ſtand upon equal terms of advantage with other religions, God then withdrew his extraordinary aſſiſtance, and left it to be maintained and ſupported by more human and

* See Vol. IV. Ser. 74. and this Vol. Ser. 197.

human and ordinary ways, and in a great meaſure by its own rational force and power upon the minds of men.

2. The gift of the Holy Ghoſt doth likewiſe ſignify and comprehend in it a more ordinary and gentle influence of God's Spirit upon the minds of men, to all holy and good purpoſes: by which I mean, an immediate operation and aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt afforded to men, to relieve the weakneſs and impotence of human nature, to help and ſtrengthen us to the performance of what the goſpel requires of us. And this I ſhall have occaſion to explain more particularly, when I have gone over the other parts of the text.

Secondly, You have here the qualification of the perſons who were to be made partakers of this gift, and that is, believing and embracing the goſpel. *This he ſpake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him ſhould receive.*

The extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Spirit were not conferred on any but thoſe who embraced the faith of Chriſt, and made profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion. Not that all Chriſtians were endowed with thoſe extraordinary gifts, much leſs all in an equal degree: but they were diſtributed, as St. Paul tells us, in ſuch manner and meaſure as the wiſdom of God thought fit, and as was moſt for the uſe and edification of the church. But all were partakers of the Holy Ghoſt in reſpect of his more ordinary influence and aſſiſtance, and this gift all Chriſtians received upon their embracing and owning the Chriſtian religion. Thus Acts v. 32. *The Holy Ghoſt* is ſaid *to be given by God to them that obey him.* And Gal. iii. 14. We are ſaid *to receive the promiſe of the Spirit through faith.* And Eph. i. 13. *In whom alſo after that ye believed, ye were ſealed with that Holy Spirit of promiſe.*

And becauſe this profeſſion of faith was made in baptiſm, whereby men are ſolemnly initiated into the Chriſtian religion, hence it is, that this gift of the Holy Ghoſt is in ſcripture promiſed, and ſaid to be conferred in baptiſm, Acts ii. 38. *Then Peter ſaid unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* And Heb. vi. 4. the apoſtle

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by dispensing plentifully spiritual gifts, as the princes of this world are wont at such a time to scatter temporal favours and benefits. And this the scripture takes notice of, as an evidence and testimony of his royal dignity, and glorious exaltation at the right-hand of God. Acts v. 31. 32. *Him hath God exalted,* speaking of our blessed Lord, *with his own right-hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Where you see that *the gift of the Holy Ghost* is mentioned as a testimony of our Saviour's being *exalted as a Prince at the right hand of God.* But more expressly St Paul, Eph. iv. 8 applies to our Saviour these words of the Psalmist, *Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

3. After our Saviour's ascension, there was the greatest occasion that ever was for the bestowing of this gift of the Holy Ghost, considering what kind of persons they were that were appointed to publish the gospel to the world: and that this great work being to be carried on by instruments in all appearance so weak, and mean, and contemptible, there was an absolute necessity of an extraordinary testimony to be given from heaven to the divinity of this new doctrine, and of a divine power and presence going along with it, to encourage and support those weak instruments in carrying on of this work, against the mighty opposition and persecution it was likely to meet withal, and against such difficulties and obstacles as were plainly insuperable by any human power and means. For as there never was a work of greater consequence and difficulty than this undertaking; so could this divine power and assistance never have appeared and manifested itself upon a fitter and more worthy occasion. Since our Saviour, according to the wise counsel of God, intended, that after his ascension into heaven, his gospel should be published to the world, it was highly requisite that the minds of men should be prepared for it, and way made for the more ready entertainment and easy passage of it, by some signal testimony of the divine presence attending the first publish-

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ers of it, and by circumſtances, though not ſo full of terror and amazement as thoſe which did accompany he giving of the law, yet really of greater force and efficacy, and more apt to convince the world of the truth of this doctrine, and to inſinuate it more effectually into the hearts and conſciences of men.

And now that I have given you a brief account of the three particulars which from this text offer themſelves to our conſideration, I ſhall return back to that which I intended more eſpecially to inſiſt upon, and that is the more ordinary influence of the holy Spirit of God upon the minds of thoſe who believe and embrace the Chriſtian doctrine; and this I ſhall endeavour to explain to you under theſe four heads.

Firſt, I ſhall open to you the nature of it.

Secondly, The neceſſity of it, to enable us to perform the condition of the goſpel covenant.

Thirdly, The bleſſed effects of it.

Fourthly, The extent of it as to perſons and times.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to open to you the nature of this gift of the Holy Ghoſt, underſtanding by it the ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit of God upon the hearts and minds of believers. And I doubt not but that the ſcripture means by it an immediate influence and operation of the holy Spirit of God upon the minds of men, an inward power, ſtrength and aſſiſtance, communicated to Chriſtians, to all the purpoſes of holineſs and obedience, enabling them to be ſuch *manner of perſons in all holy converſation and godlineſs* as the goſpel requires: and not only that this ſtrength and aſſiſtance is offered and afforded to us, *to work in us, both to will and to do* all that is neceſſary to ſalvation, if we put no obſtacle thereto, and do not reſiſt the Spirit of God, and the bleſſed motions of it; but likewiſe that this power does continually dwell and reſide in all true Chriſtians, if we do not grieve the Spirit of God, and provoke him to withdraw himſelf from us.

And this is ſufficiently declared in ſeveral places of the New Teſtament, where we are ſaid to be *aſſiſted by a divine power, and ſtrengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man*; *to walk in the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, and by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh*;

by dispensing plentifully spiritual gifts, as the princes of this world are wont at such a time to scatter temporal favours and benefits. And this the scripture takes notice of, as an evidence and testimony of his royal dignity, and glorious exaltation at the right-hand of God. Acts v. 31. 32. *Him hath God exalted,* speaking of our blessed Lord, *with his own right-hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Where you see that *the gift of the Holy Ghost* is mentioned as a testimony of our Saviour's being *exalted as a Prince at the right hand of God.* But more expressly St Paul, Eph. iv. 8 applies to our Saviour these words of the Psalmist, *Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

3. After our Saviour's ascension, there was the greatest occasion that ever was for the bestowing of this gift of the Holy Ghost, considering what kind of persons they were that were appointed to publish the gospel to the world: and that this great work being to be carried on by instruments in all appearance so weak, and mean, and contemptible, there was an absolute necessity of an extraordinary testimony to be given from heaven to the divinity of this new doctrine, and of a divine power and presence going along with it, to encourage and support those weak instruments in carrying on of this work, against the mighty opposition and persecution it was likely to meet withal, and against such difficulties and obstacles as were plainly insuperable by any human power and means. For as there never was a work of greater consequence and difficulty than this undertaking; so could this divine power and assistance never have appeared and manifested itself upon a fitter and more worthy occasion. Since our Saviour, according to the wise counsel of God, intended, that after his ascension into heaven, his gospel should be published to the world, it was highly requisite that the minds of men should be prepared for it, and way made for the more ready entertainment and easy passage of it, by some signal testimony of the divine presence attending the first publishers

ers of it, and by circumſtances, though not ſo full of terror and amazement as thoſe which did accompany the giving of the law, yet really of greater force and efficacy, and more apt to convince the world of the truth of this doctrine, and to inſinuate it more effectually into the hearts and conſciences of men.

And now that I have given you a brief account of the three particulars which from this text offer themſelves to our conſideration, I ſhall return back to that which I intended more eſpecially to inſiſt upon, and that is the more ordinary influence of the holy Spirit of God upon the minds of thoſe who believe and embrace the Chriſtian doctrine; and this I ſhall endeavour to explain to you under theſe four heads.

Firſt, I ſhall open to you the nature of it.

Secondly, The neceſſity of it, to enable us to perform the condition of the goſpel covenant.

Thirdly, The bleſſed effects of it.

Fourthly, The extent of it as to perſons and times.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to open to you the nature of this gift of the Holy Ghoſt, underſtanding by it the ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit of God upon the hearts and minds of believers. And I doubt not but that the ſcripture means by it an immediate influence and operation of the holy Spirit of God upon the minds of men, an inward power, ſtrength and aſſiſtance, communicated to Chriſtians, to all the purpoſes of holineſs and obedience, enabling them to be ſuch *manner of perſons in all holy converſation and godlineſs* as the goſpel requires: and not only that this ſtrength and aſſiſtance is offered and afforded to us, *to work in us, both to will and to do* all that is neceſſary to ſalvation, if we put no obſtacle thereto, and do not reſiſt the Spirit of God, and the bleſſed motions of it; but likewiſe that this power does continually dwell and reſide in all true Chriſtians, if we do not grieve the Spirit of God, and provoke him to withdraw himſelf from us.

And this is ſufficiently declared in ſeveral places of the New Teſtament, where we are ſaid to be *aſſiſted by a divine power, and ſtrengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man*; *to walk in the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, and by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the fleſh*;

flesh; and likewise in those texts, wherein the Spirit of God is said *to work mightily in them that believe, to dwell in them, to sanctify and renew them*, with many such like expressions frequently to be met with in the writings of the Apostles. By all which, unless we offer notorious violence to the plain and obvious sense of them, we must necessarily understand something more than the confirmation which was given to the Christian doctrine by the miracles that were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost; which doctrine being thus confirmed, does by way of rational conviction work upon the minds of men, and change their wills, without any internal operation and immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost. Such a remote influence of the Spirit of God upon men as this is, does by no means seem to answer the fulness of those phrases and expressions which the scripture so frequently useth concerning it; and if any man do but seriously weigh and consider them, nothing less than an immediate influence of the Spirit of God upon our hearts, and a real strength and power thereby communicated to us, can be imagined to satisfy the proper sense and meaning of the several expressions which I have mentioned.

And that the scripture, by the promise of the Spirit, and the various expressions concerning it, does mean this ordinary assistance common to all Christians in all times, and not only the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost which were peculiar to the first ages of Christianity, seems to me to be very plain; because the scripture makes the gift of the Spirit to be common to all believers, and to be given to all that are baptized, and this in all ages of the church; as appears from those words of St Peter, Acts ii. 38. 39. *Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* This promise is the promise of the Holy Ghost, which he says is made to them and their posterity, that in all succeeding ages should be gained to the faith of Christ. So that this *promise of the Holy Ghost*, which St Peter

speaks

ſpeaks of, and declares to be conferred in baptiſm, does not reſpect only the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, but all ſucceeding generations; and therefore cannot be underſtood of the power of miracles, becauſe that is long ſince ceaſed in the Chriſtian church.

And this appears yet more evidently, in that the ſcripture makes the want of the Spirit a ſign that a man is no true and ſincere Chriſtian: *If any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his*; and, on the contrary, makes our having the Spirit of God a mark of a child of God; *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the ſons of God*. But our Saviour hath aſſured us, that men may have the miraculous gifts of the Spirit of God, may *propheſy in Chriſt's name, and caſt out devils in his name, and in his name do many wondrous works, and yet be workers of iniquity, and ſhut out of the kingdom of God*: and, on the other hand, men may not have theſe miraculous gifts, and yet be the children of God. But this will yet more fully appear, if we conſider, in the

Second place, The great neceſſity of ſuch an immediate influence and aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God, to enable Chriſtians to perform the condition of the covenant of the goſpel. The great corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and the impotency and weakneſs conſequent thereupon, is not only matter of divine revelation, but hath always been the general apprehenſion and acknowledgement, and the ſad complaint of the wiſeſt part of mankind; and indeed every man may feel it in himſelf, and obſerve it in others. Now, for our relief and recovery out of this miſerable and degenerate ſtate, God was pleaſed, in great pity and commiſeration to mankind, to ſend his Son into the world, to reveal his will and our duty a-new to us, for our direction in the way to life and happineſs; and, by the ſacrifice of himſelf, to make a perfect expiation of ſin; and to proclaim forgiveneſs of ſins to us, for the encouragement of our repentance, and return to our duty; and, in a word, to offer new terms of life and happineſs to us, upon the conditions of faith, and repentance, and new obedience.

But after all this is done for us, we are ſtill without ſtrength, our nature being depraved, and ſunk into that

impotency and weakneſs, that without the powerful aſſiſtance of divine grace, we are utterly unable to perform thoſe moſt equal and reaſonable conditions which the goſpel requires of us, being, as the ſcripture expreſſeth it, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and eſtranged from the life of God, through the darkneſs that is in us, and the blindneſs of our hearts*; being enſlaved to vitious habits, and having a *carnal mind*, which is *enmity to God*, and renders us incapable to receive or reliſh divine and ſpiritual things. So that, notwithſtanding all that our bleſſed Saviour hath done and ſuffered for us, and all the merciful overtures of pardon and happineſs which the goſpel makes to us, all this will ſignify nothing to our benefit and advantage, unleſs our impotency be relieved, and new life and ſtrength be conveyed to us, to awaken and excite us to that which is good, to enable us to mortify and ſubdue our evil and corrupt inclinations, to break off our vitious habits, and to walk in the ways of God's commandments. For *we are not ſufficient of ourſelves, as of ourſelves*, for any of theſe things; *but our ſufficiency is of God. Without Chriſt we can do nothing*; and it is only *through him ſtrengthening of us that we are able to do all thoſe things* which are neceſſary to be done by us, in order to the obtaining of that happineſs and ſalvation which the goſpel hath promiſed, and our Saviour hath purchaſed for us. And therefore our merciful Redeemer, that he might not leave his work imperfect, hath ſent his bleſſed Spirit into our hearts, *to enlighten the eyes of our minds*, and to open and diſpoſe our underſtandings for the receiving of divine and ſpiritual truths; to conquer likewiſe the perverſeneſs and ſtubbornneſs of our wills, and to ſet us at liberty from the ſlavery of our luſts; (*for where the Spirit of God is*, as St Paul tells us, *there is liberty*;) *to renew our natures, and to purify our hearts, to mortify our corrupt affections, and to aſſiſt us to every good word and work*; to ſtrengthen us againſt temptations, and to ſupport us under ſufferings and perſecutions; and, in a word, *to keep us by this mighty power of God*, and gracious aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, *through faith unto ſalvation*.

So that whoſoever ſhall but duly weigh and conſider his own darkneſs and ignorance, the ſtrange and unreaſonable

ſonable prejudices of a corrupt mind againſt divine truth, and againſt the practice of holineſs and virtue, the ſtrong bias of mens natural inclinations to that which is evil, the mighty force and power of evil and inveterate habits within us, and the ſtrength and violence of manifold temptations without us, together with the great difficulties and diſcouragements of piety and virtue, eſpecially when they are attended with grievous ſufferings and *fiery trials*, for righteouſneſs ſake; I ſay, he that conſiders all this will eaſily diſcern, and readily acknowledge, how great a neceſſity there is of the grace and aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit, to all the purpoſes of a firm faith, and a ſincere repentance, and a conſtant and univerſal obedience to the holy laws and precepts of the goſpel, to reſcue us from the power and dominion of ſin, to raiſe us to a new life, to engage us in an holy courſe, and to fortify our reſolutions againſt ſin, and to enable us to perſevere, and patiently continue in doing and ſuffering the will of God.

It is this gracious influence, and continual aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit reſiding and dwelling in us which ſecures all the other bleſſings and benefits of the goſpel to us, and conducts us ſafely through all the temptations of this world, and the difficulties of a Chriſtian courſe, to *the end of our faith, the eternal ſalvation of our ſouls*. For which reaſon, the Spirit of God dwelling in good men, and evidencing itſelf by its genuine fruits and effects, the graces and virtues of a good life, is ſaid to be the *pledge and earneſt of our future inheritance*, and of a bleſſed reſurrection to eternal life, and *to ſeal us up to the day of redemption*, Rom. viii. 11. *But if the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* For the ſame reaſon the Apoſtle makes the Spirit of God, by which Chriſtians are governed and led, to be the mark of their *adoption*, and being *the children of God, and heirs of eternal life*. Ver. 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the ſons of God.* And ver. 16. 17. *The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt.*

And elsewhere the Apostle useth it for an argument, why we should be careful not to resist or quench the motions of God's blessed Spirit, because by this mark *we are sealed* to eternal life. *And quench not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* I should now have proceeded, in the

Third place, To shew the blessed effects of the influence of the holy Spirit dwelling and residing in us. But that, together with the extent of this gift of the Holy Ghost, as to persons and times, I shall refer to another opportunity.

SERMON CCI.

Of the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, on the minds of Christians.

JOHN vii. 39.

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

The second sermon on this text.

IN my former discourse from these words, I observed, that the gift of the Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, comprehends under it two things:

First, Those extraordinary and miraculous gifts which were bestowed upon the Apostles and primitive Christians, in order to the planting and propagating of the Christian religion in the world; together with that extraordinary influence of God's Spirit upon the minds of believers which accompanied the first preaching of the gospel.

Secondly, The more ordinary and gentle influences of the Spirit of God, upon the minds of all those who believe and embrace the gospel.

The latter of these I proposed to speak to more particularly and fully, and that under these four heads:

First,

Firſt, To open the nature of this influence.

Secondly, To ſhew the neceſſity of it, to enable us to perform the condition of the goſpel-covenant.

Thirdly, To conſider the bleſſed effects of it.

Fourthly, To conſider the extent of it, as to perſons and times.

The two firſt of theſe I have ſpoken to, and now proceed to what remains, *viz.*

Thirdly, To conſider the bleſſed effects of this gift of the Holy Ghoſt. And they are many and great.

I ſhall enumerate them as briefly as I can, not intending to inſiſt long upon them. And, in general, all the good that is in us, and proceeds from us, all good thoughts and inclinations, all good purpoſes and reſolutions, all good works and actions, are in ſcripture every where aſcribed to the dictates and motions, to the influence and aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit of God. It is he that *works in us both to will and to do of his own mere goodneſs*; all our ſtrength and ſufficiency is from him: to his bleſſed inſpirations and aids we owe all good inclinations, our beginning, and our progreſs, and our perſeverance in virtue and goodneſs. And though the Spirit be ſaid to be given to them that do already believe, that is, ſo as to dwell and reſide, to take up his conſtant habitation and abode only in thoſe who have already ſincerely embraced the Chriſtian faith; yet this doth not exclude a preventing influence and operation of God's holy Spirit upon the minds of thoſe to whom the goſpel is offered, diſpoſing them to embrace and entertain it, and by this means working faith in them. And in this ſenſe it is, that faith in ſcripture is ſaid to be *the gift of God*, becauſe it is firſt wrought in them by the influence and operation of that bleſſed Spirit, which is promiſed to dwell and reſide in them after they have believed, and ſincerely embrace the Chriſtian religion.

More particularly, theſe bleſſed fruits and effects are conſtantly in ſcripture attributed to the holy Spirit of God.

1. Our ſanctification. We are ſaid to be renewed by the Holy Ghoſt, and by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the fleſh. That great change which is wrought in

man, which in ſcripture is called by the ſeveral names of regeneration, and a new birth, of the new creature, and the new man, is conſtantly aſcribed to the Spirit of God, as the author of it.

2. The conduct of our whole Chriſtian courſe, and all the actions of it, and our conſtancy and perſeverance in it, are likewiſe aſcribed to the ſame bleſſed cauſe. We are ſaid to be led by the Spirit, and to walk in the Spirit; that is, to be guided and aſſiſted in all that we do by this bleſſed principle, which does, as it were, act and animate all good men: and we are ſaid to be kept by the mighty power of God, that is, by the powerful operation of God's holy Spirit, through faith unto ſalvation.

3. All particular graces and virtues are likewiſe ſaid to be *the fruits of the Spirit*, Gal. v. 22. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith*, (or rather *fidelity*,) *meekneſs, temperance*. And Epheſ. v. 9. *The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs, and truth*. And charity, which is the ſum almoſt of all other graces and virtues, is ſaid to be planted and wrought in us by the Spirit, 1 Pet. i. 22. *Seeing ye have purified your ſouls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto charity, or unfeigned love of the brethren*.

4. By the ſame Spirit we are ſaid to be made partakers of that great and glorious privilege of adoption, and are advanced to that high honour and dignity of being called the ſons of God, Rom. viii. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the ſons of God*, and conſequently heirs of a bleſſed reſurrection to eternal life. For the Apoſtle reaſons, ver. 16. 17. The *Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit*, that is, is a teſtimony within us, *that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt, if ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may be alſo glorified together*. So that the holy Spirit of God, which is conferred upon all ſincere Chriſtians, and does reſide in them, is a mark or ſeal of their being the children of God, and a pledge or earneſt of the bleſſed inheritance of eternal life, as the ſcripture very plainly and frequently declares, 2 Cor. i. 21. 22. *Now he which*

which eſtabliſheth us with you in Chriſt, and hath appointed us, is God; who hath alſo ſealed us, or ſet his ſignature or mark upon us; (and what this is, he explains in the next words;) *and hath given us the earneſt or pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.* Epheſ. i. 13, 14. *In whom alſo, after that ye believed, ye were ſealed with that holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion.* And, chap. iv. 30. *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption.*

5. By this Spirit we have free acceſs to God in prayer, in confidence that we ſhall have our petitions granted, Epheſ. ii. 18. *For through him*, that is, through Jeſus Chriſt, *we both have an acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father.* By the ſame Spirit likewiſe we are aſſiſted in our prayers to God, and directed what to ask of him. So St Paul tells us, Rom. viii. 26. that *we do not know what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and intercedeth for us;* that is, ſuggeſts to us ſuch petitions and requeſts as are fit for us to put up to God.

6. By the ſame Spirit joy and peace in believing, and from the teſtimony of a good conſcience great conſolation and good hope through grace, are frequently inſtilled into us, and ſhed abroad in our hearts. Hence are thoſe expreſſions ſo frequent in ſcripture, of the conſolations of the Spirit, of peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, which, as it is the natural fruit of righteouſneſs, ſo it is likewiſe produced and increaſed in us by the ſecret operation and influence of God's holy Spirit.

7. And laſtly, By the ſame Spirit Chriſtians are ſupported and born up, cheared and comforted in all their troubles and afflictions, and that in a very extraordinary and ſupernatural manner, when they fall under great tribulations and ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake. And this influence and aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit was very viſible and remarkable among the primitive Chriſtians, who were ſo terribly expoſed to the moſt fierce and cruel perſecutions; and may proportionably be expected in all caſes of extraordinary ſuffering for the teſtimony of God's truth.

And

And though this influence and assistance, this conduct and guidance of the divine Spirit, be commonly very gentle and secret, and do usually work upon us in so imperceptible a manner, that it is very hard, if not impossible, particularly to distinguish between the motions of God's Spirit, and those of our own minds, between the immediate suggestions of the Holy Ghost, and the dictates of our own reason; yet we are in general sufficiently assured of it, partly from the effects themselves, but principally from the express promises and declarations from scripture, that Christians are acted by a supernatural principle, and secretly assisted by the influence of a Spirit above our own: and therefore we have reason, as the scripture constantly does, to ascribe all the good that is in us, or that is done by us, to this gracious assistance and powerful influence of the holy Spirit of God upon our minds, and thankfully to acknowledge, that in us, that is, in our flesh, in our carnal minds, considered as destitute of the Spirit of God, there dwells nothing that is good, and that by the grace of God we are what we are, and are enabled to do all the good we do through Christ strengthening of us by his Spirit in the inner man. I proceed to the

Fourth and last thing I proposed to consider, *viz.* The extent of this gift of the holy Spirit of God, as to persons and times. And in short this gift is bestowed upon every particular Christian, every sincere believer; for we receive the promise of the Spirit by faith: and *if any man*, says the Apostle, Rom. viii. 9. *have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; that is, he does not belong to him, he is no true Christian. And, 1 Cor. iii. 16. *Know ye not*, says the same Apostle, speaking of all Christians in general, *know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

And that this gift extends to all persons, in all times and ages of the church, to all that sincerely embrace the Christian profession, and are admitted into it by baptism, is plain from that discourse of St. Peter, which I had occasion to mention before, Acts ii. 38. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy*

Holy Ghoſt. And that this was not a favour and privilege peculiar to the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, but common to all ſucceeding times, is evident from what follows, ver. 39. *But the promiſe*, that is, the great promiſe of the holy Ghoſt, *is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.* That is, this promiſe of the Spirit extends to all thoſe who ſhall hereafter embrace the Chriſtian profeſſion.

And, in this ſenſe, our Saviour makes good that promiſe which he made to the Apoſtles, *to be with them always* in the work of *making diſciples, and baptizing them, to the end of the world*; that is, he would accompany the labours of the paſtors and teachers of his church in all ages with ſuch a preſence and influence of his Spirit upon thoſe that were taught and baptized, as ſhould be ſuitable to the occaſions and neceſſities of the church, both the paſtors and the members of it, *unto the end of the world.* In a word, this gift of God's holy Spirit is beſtowed upon all thoſe who by baptiſm are admitted into Chriſt's religion; and if it be cheriſhed and complied with, and the bleſſed motions of it be not reſiſted and quenched by us, it will abide and continue with us, and produce thoſe bleſſed fruits and effects which I have before mentioned.

Having thus explained the ſeveral particulars contained in the text, all that now remains is to make ſome uſeful inferences from the whole; and they ſhall be theſe following, and I ſhall be very brief in them.

I. What an encouragement is here to our duty, that we have ſuch a mighty aid and aſſiſtance promiſed and afforded to us in the goſpel? So that the Apoſtle doth with great reaſon exhort, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having therefore theſe promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* And we are utterly inexcuſable, if we do not make uſe of that grace which is promiſed, and ready to be afforded to us to this end; it is our own fault if ſin ſtill *have dominion over us, and reign in our mortal bodies, that we ſhould obey it in the luſts of it.*

II. What great cauſe have we thankfully to acknowledge the wonderful goodneſs of God to us, in beſtowing

ing such an invaluable gift upon us, as this of the holy Spirit, by whose grace and assistance alone we are made partakers of all the other blessings and benefits of the gospel? Had we been still left without strength, that great salvation which Christ hath purchased for us, and which the gospel offers, would have signified nothing to us, for want of power to have performed the conditions which the gospel requires of all that hope for eternal life and salvation.

III. Let us be always ready to comply with the motions and suggestions of the blessed Spirit, and sincerely make use of those aids and assistances which he is always ready to afford to us; and let us take great heed that we do not by any disobedience of ours to his blessed motions, or by any wilful presumptuous sins, *resist, and quench, and grieve this holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

If the Spirit of God vouchsafe to dwell in us, and to make his abode in our sinful souls and bodies, let us do nothing that is unworthy of so divine and heavenly a guest; let his presence with us fill our hearts with a continual awe and reverence of him, and engage us effectually to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; let nothing be acted by us, or proceed from us, which may defile this temple of the Holy Ghost. *Ye are the temple of the living God,* says St Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 16. And in the first of the Corinthians, iii. 16. 17. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* More particularly, the Apostle useth it as an argument to flee from fornication, because our bodies also are the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19. *Flee fornication: for every sin that a man doth,* that is, other sins which men commit, *are without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body;* that is, pollutes and defiles it. And then it follows, *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's.*

IV. Let

IV. Let us earneſtly beg of God his holy Spirit, and continually depend upon him for his grace and aſſiſtance, in an humble ſenſe of our own impotency and weakneſs, of the frailty and treachery of our own ſpirits, of the fickleneſs and inconſtancy of our beſt purpoſes and reſolutions, always remembering that ſaying of our Saviour's, John xv. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing*: and that of St Paul, Epheſ. ii. 8. *For by grace are ye ſaved through faith; and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God*: and that of St Peter, 1 Pet. i. 5. ſpeaking in general of all true Chriſtians, *Who*, ſays he, *are kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation*. This power of God is the Spirit, which they that believe receive, and by the bleſſed guidance and influence whereof they are kept unto ſalvation.

V. This ſhews us what an advantage we have by the Chriſtian religion, which makes us partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, whereby is afforded to us all neceſſary direction, and aſſiſtance, and comfort in our Chriſtian courſe. Our Saviour tells his diſciples, that the preſence and influence of this Comforter and Advocate, whom he would ſend to abide with them for ever, would be more to them than even his own perſonal preſence among them, which ſurely we ſhould look upon as an unſpeakable privilege and happineſs; and yet the inward preſence of the divine Spirit is more for our ſecurity and comfort, than the beſt teacher and example; becauſe it is inward, and conveys a real ſtrength to us; and it is univerſal, diffuſing itſelf at once into the hearts and minds of all good men, and is always preſent to them, which Chriſt's perſonal and viſible preſence was not, nor could be: ſo that to all purpoſes of direction and aſſiſtance, of ſecurity and comfort, we are in a better condition under the continual influence and conduct of God's holy Spirit, than they who had the advantage and happineſs of converſing perſonally with our Saviour here upon earth. And therefore he tells his diſciples, that it was really for their benefit and advantage that he ſhould leave the world, to make way for the coming of this Comforter and Advocate, John xvi. 7. *Nevertheleſs I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not*

come

come unto you : but if I depart, I will send him unto you. So that they were gainers by their loss, and his departure from them upon these terms was really to their advantage.

VI. This shews the great fault of the contempt and neglect of the sacrament of baptism, which was instituted by our Saviour as the solemn rite and ceremony of admitting persons into the Christian religion, and the means of making us partakers of this gift of the Spirit, and of all the blessed fruits and effects of it ; so that this sacrament cannot be neglected or slighted, without great affront to the Christian religion, and contempt of one of the greatest blessings promised in the gospel. They that were admitted to the solemn profession of Christianity by baptism were *made partakers of the Holy Ghost* ; and this not only in the Apostles times, but in all after-ages ; for this *promise of the holy Ghost was to them, and their children, and to all that were afar off, even to as many as the Lord their God should call* ; that is, to all that should embrace the Christian religion, and make a solemn profession of it in baptism, in all succeeding ages, to the end of the world

VII. What hath been discoursed upon this argument, discovers the vanity of many mens pretensions to the Spirit. Some pretend to infallibility, all pretence whereto is vain, without miracles to justify and make good this pretence ; and yet upon this presumption of infallibility, without any proof of it, but only that it is convenient for them to have it, which will as well prove all others to be infallible, because it is every whit as convenient for them ; I say, upon this presumption and pretence, they assume to themselves to dictate to all the world what they shall believe, and to censure and condemn all those who will not submit to their dictates, as miserably mistaken, and out of the way of salvation ; whereas the infallibility of the Apostles was a supernatural gift, not evident of itself, but evidenced to the world by the miracles which were wrought to confirm the truth of their testimony and doctrine : and without this evidence of infallibility, no man's, no church's pretences to it ought to be regarded, but ought to be looked upon as fanatical enthusiasm : besides the prodigious unchari-

uncharitableneſs of this ſpirit is as directly contrary as can be to the firſt and chief *fruit of the Spirit* mentioned by the Apoſtle, which is love or charity.

Others pretend to be guided by the Spirit in all their actions, and to be governed in an extraordinary manner by particular impulſes and impreſſions from the Spirit of God; which they likewiſe pretend they can certainly diſcern from the motions of their own minds and imaginations. But as they can give no reaſon for this, ſo we have ſeen many times in experience, that men have been led into unlawful and wicked practices, and have done weak, and unreaſonable, and ridiculous things, and then have blaſphemouſly charged them upon the Spirit of God; a preſumption of a high nature, and which hath ſome reſemblance to the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and ſeems to be of near affinity with it. For as the unpardonable ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt conſiſted in reſiſting the evidence of our Saviour's miracles, and perverſly and maliciouſly imputing the operations of the Spirit of God to the power and efficacy of the devil; ſo, on the other hand, to pretend the Spirit of God and his motions for the works of the devil, and any thing that is wicked, and to aſcribe theſe things, which are more likely to proceed from the inſtigation of that evil ſpirit, to the impulſe of the holy Spirit of God, is a high blaſphemy of the Holy Ghoſt.

Others pretend, that the Spirit doth immediately dictate to them their prayers, which many times are very confuſed and unbeſeeming, and too plainly the iſſue of a heated imagination; whereas *God is not the God of confuſion, but of order*. And what is merely the effect of an acquired habit, or natural fluency and facility of expreſſion and warm affections, they confidently aſcribe to the Spirit of God; whereas the Spirit of God is more frequently and certainly in the ſtill voice, than in the high wind and fire, the boiſterous paſſions, and fiery zeal of men. And certainly he that takes care to put up wiſe and decent petitions to God, and conſiders carefully what to beg of him, and aſks it in a becoming manner, with faith and true fervency of affection, though in a form, hath much more reaſon to conclude that he

prays in and by the Spirit of God, than he that hath the greateſt freedom of extempore effuſions.

And after all, there is a much better and clearer demonſtration that a man hath the Spirit of God, than any of theſe pretences, and that is from the undoubted *fruits of the Spirit*, in the graces and virtues of a good life, which are viſible and manifeſt in the temper and converſation of a good man; and without theſe, all pretences to the Spirit of God are but fancy and vain deluſions; ſuch men *deceive themſelves, and the truth is not in them.*

VIII. And laſtly, From hence it appears how happy it is for us that we are not left in our own hands, and to our own weakneſs and impotency, and to work out our own ſalvation, but that we are under the continual conduct and powerful protection of ſuch a guardian, and that the holy Spirit is always ready to be afforded to us, to all the purpoſes of guidance and aſſiſtance, of comfort and ſupport, of ſanctification and obedience, of patient continuance and perſeverance in well doing. *Let us therefore*, as the Apoſtle exhorts, *work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling, becauſe it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do.* We are not left to ourſelves to carry on this great work, for then it would certainly miſcarry; but God works in us both the will and inclination to that which is good, and gives us the power to do it: he does not force our wills, but incline them by the gentle ſuggeſtions and motions of his bleſſed Spirit; with which if we comply, we are happy; if we reſiſt them, and rebel againſt them, we receive the grace of God in vain, and our ruin and deſtruction is of ourſelves.

But can we then do nothing? No, not without the preventing and aſſiſting grace of God; but that being afforded to us, we may comply with the motions of God's bleſſed Spirit, we may co-operate and concur with his aſſiſtance. God aſſiſts, but we do; he ſanctifies and renews us by the Holy Ghoſt, and yet we purify and cleanſe ourſelves.

But is not this injurious to the grace of God, if we do any thing at all, and the grace of God do not do all in us and for us? I anſwer,

1. It

1. It is a great grace of God to help our weakneſs, and to relieve our impotency, and to ſtrengthen and enable us to do what we cannot do of ourſelves. We owe our ſalvation to the grace of God, to the influence and aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, if ſo be that without it we ſhould ſtill remain dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and ſhould never be able to emerge and recover out of that corrupt and miſerable ſtate.

2. Grace does not deſtroy nature, nor divine aſſiſtance take away our liberty, but frees us from our bondage; and, as David expreſſeth it, *enlargeth our hearts to run the way of God's commandments*; for if God do all, and we nothing, all exhortations and perſuaſions would be in vain.

But then it ſeems that we may receive the grace of God in vain, and reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt; and our complying with it, or not reſiſting of it, is our own act; which is to make men their own Saviour, and to give the caſting and determining vote to human liberty. I anſwer,

1. The ſcripture expreſly ſays, that men may receive the grace of God in vain, and reject the counſel of God againſt themſelves; and that if we rebel againſt, and diſobey the motions of God's Spirit, he will depart from us, and we forfeit his aſſiſtance.

2. All this is ἀργὸς λόγος, *mere cavil*; as will appear to any one, by this plain inſtance. A rebel is convicted, and liable to the ſentence and condemnation of the law; he ſues for a pardon, and obtains and accepts it: will any man now ſay, that becauſe he aſks and accepts it from the king, and the king does not take his hand and open it, and violently thruſt the pardon into it, that this man ſaves himſelf, and takes away the glory of the king's grace and mercy, and that he owes his life to himſelf, and not to the king's bounty and goodneſs? A man would be thought very ſenſeleſs, that ſhould ſo aſcribe this man's deliverance from death to any act of his own, as not to think it wholly owing to the king's grace and favour. I think the caſe is the very ſame, concerning mens complying with that grace which God affords them for their repentance unto life. I would fain know of theſe ſubtle objectors, whether

Moſes, when he ſays, Deut. xxx. 19. *I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing and curſing, therefore chuſe life*; does not, in ſo ſaying, plainly ſuppoſe, that men may chuſe life or refuſe it? and if ſo, whether he intended to make men their own Saviour?

But this objection is preſſed yet a little farther; that if this be ſo, then Judas had as much cauſe to thank God as Peter had. And who ever denied, or can deny, that a rebel who refuſeth a pardon offered to him by his prince, hath the ſame real obligation of gratitude to his prince, with him that accepts it? The prince offers the ſame favour to both, and the obligation is equal; and though he that accepts it doth not ſave himſelf, yet he that refuſeth it deſtroys himſelf. And at the judgment of the great day, all impenitent ſinners under the goſpel ſhall be forced to acknowledge the grace of God to them, in affording the opportunity of ſalvation, and ſhall only blame and condemn themſelves for neglecting that happy opportunity. But if an irreſiſtible degree of grace be neceſſary to every man's ſalvation, it is plain that impenitent ſinners never had the opportunity of ſalvation, and conſequently cannot condemn themſelves for the neglect of it.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might root out of the minds of men an inveterate falſe perſuaſion, concerning the manner of the operation of God's grace in the converſion of ſinners. And thus much may ſuffice to have been ſpoken concerning the operation of God's Spirit upon men, in order to their converſion and making of them good: but after men are converted, and do ſincerely repent and believe the goſpel, they have the Spirit of God in another manner; he dwells and reſides in believers, as a conſtant and ſettled principle of holineſs and obedience, as I have already ſhewn.

SER-

SERMON CCII.

The fruits of the Spirit the same with moral virtues.

Preached on Whitsunday 1690.

EPHES. v. 9.

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.

I Have formerly, upon occasion of this festival solemnity, discoursed on divers sorts of arguments relating to the holy Spirit of God; as concerning the * miraculous powers and gifts of the holy Ghost conferred upon the Apostles in a visible manner, when they were assembled together upon this day of Pentecost, to qualify and enable them for the more speedy and effectual planting and propagating of the Christian religion in the world; which is the argument more peculiarly proper to this day.

I have likewise † discoursed to you concerning the sanctifying power and virtue of the holy Spirit of God, which is common to all Christians, and to all ages of the Christian church; as also concerning the blessed fruit and effect of God's holy Spirit conferred upon Christians in baptism, and which does continually dwell and reside in all those who do sincerely perform and make good their baptismal vow, to assist and enable them to all the purposes of holiness and obedience, and to work and increase in us all those graces and virtues, which are here in the text said to be the fruit of the holy Spirit of God. *For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.* The connexion of which words with

* See Ser. 197. † See Ser. 200. and 201.

with the Apoſtle's foregoing diſcourſe is briefly this: At the 17th verſe of the former chapter, the Apoſtle gives a ſolemn charge to the Chriſtians at Epheſus, who were newly converted from Heatheniſm to Chriſtianity, to be careful that their converſation be anſwerable to that holy religion which they now made profeſſion of, and that as they had quitted the religion and rites of Paganiſm, ſo likewiſe that they would abandon the vices and evil practices of it; that the world might ſee that they had made as great a change in their minds and manners as in their religion. *This I ſay therefore, and teſtify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind having the underſtanding darkned, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their heart; who having loſt the ſenſe of good and evil, have given themſelves over to all filthineſs and brutiſh luſts.* And then at the 20th verſe he tells them that the Chriſtian religion requires another ſort of converſation: *But ye have not ſo learned Chriſt: if ſo be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jeſus: that ye put off, concerning the former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts, and be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*, or, *the holineſs of truth*.

And then he cautions them againſt ſeveral ſorts of vices which they had formerly lived in, and recommends the contrary virtues to their practice: and as an argument thereto he puts them again in mind of the change which they had made, at the 8th verſe of this chapter; *For ye were ſometimes darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord.* The condition they were in whilſt they were Heathens he calls darkneſs; by which metaphor he repreſents that diſmal ſtate of ignorance and wickedneſs in which they formerly were: *but now are ye light in the Lord*; being admitted into the Chriſtian religion by baptiſm, they were enlightened by the Spirit of God: for ſo the Apoſtle to the Hebrews deſcribes baptiſm by illumination, and being *made partakers of the holy Ghoſt*, Heb. vi. 4. *They that were once enlighted, and have taſted of the heavenly gift*;

gift; which he explains in the next words by being *made partakers of the holy Ghost*, because that is conferred in baptism.

But now are ye light in the Lord; walk therefore as children of the light: that is, do nothing unbecoming that state into which by the solemn profession of Christianity in baptism ye are entered; or, as it follows a little after the text, *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; walk as children of the light*, as becomes those who *are enlightened and sanctified by the holy Spirit of God*, whereof ye were *made partakers in baptism: for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.*

For the fruit of the Spirit. Some copies have it, ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτός, *for the fruit of light*, that is, of the illumination of the holy Ghost, which Christians are made partakers of in baptism, *is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth*; which will make no difference in the sense.

I shall briefly explain the importance of these three words, *goodness*, and *righteousness*, and *truth*; and then proceed to make some observations from the text.

I. *Goodness.* And what that is, the Apostle takes it for granted that every body knows: he does not go about to define or explain it, but appeals to every man's mind and conscience to tell him what it is. It is not any thing that is disputed and controverted among men, which some call good, and others evil; but that which mankind is agreed in, and which is universally approved by the light of nature, by Heathens as well as Christians; it is that which is substantially good, and that which is unquestionably so. It is not a zeal for indifferent things, about the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, and the external circumstances of it, much nicety and scrupulousness about things of no moment and consideration, such as was the Pharisees *tything of mint, anise and cummin*; disputes about *meats and drinks, and the observation of days*, and the like; but a pursuit of *the weightier things of the law*, a care of the great duties of religion, and those things wherein *the kingdom of God consists*; the practice of the great virtues of conversation, which are apt to recommend us to the general appro-

approbation of men, to gain their good-will, and to take off exasperations, and to calm and sweeten the spirits and tempers of men towards us. And they must likewise be things unquestionably good, and against which there is no exception, such as will justify and bear themselves out in the general opinion of mankind.

I know very well that *goodness*, in the strict notion of it, does signify a ready inclination of mind to benefit and help others all that we can, as we have opportunity. And this is the particular virtue of alms-giving, or, as we commonly call it, charity; which is so often recommended to us under the notion of *doing good*. Gal. vi. 10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.* And, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

But there is a larger notion of *goodness* more frequently used in the New Testament, which comprehends and takes in all those virtues of conversation which are universally and by the light of nature owned to be such, and the practice whereof is apt to recommend us to the love and esteem of all men; as, on the contrary, the neglect of them is apt to bring religion under a great scandal and censure: such are obedience to our superiors and governors, and a conscientious care to discharge all those duties which the several relations wherein we stand to others do call for from us.

Obedience to governors is recommended to us under the notion of goodness, or well-doing. 1 Pet. ii. 13. 14. 15. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* So likewise praying for those that are in authority, 1 Tim. i. 2. 3. *I exhort therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority,*

thority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

In like manner, a conscientious discharge of the duties which other relations require is recommended to be under the notion of *goodness*, and that which is a special grace and ornament to religion, 1 Tim. v. 4: *Let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God.* And Tit. ii. 9. 10. the Apostle exhorts servants to be *obedient to their masters*, that by this instance of goodness, as well as others, they may bring credit and reputation to religion; *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining; but shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

More particularly, the several virtues of conversation are frequently instanced in as branches of goodness, as unity, peaceableness, courtesy, compassion, and good-will towards all men. The practice of these things the Apostle calls *the following of that which is good*, Rom. xii. 9. 10. &c. *Let love be without dissimulation: abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one towards another. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good.* So likewise the Apostle, 1 Thess. v. 15. instanceth in abstaining from revenge, as an eminent piece of goodness. *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.* And St Peter also gives much the same instances of goodness that St Paul hath done, 1 Pet. iii. 8. 9. &c. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren: be*

be pitiful. Be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise bleſſing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye ſhould inherit a bleſſing. For he that will love life, and ſee good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they ſpeak no guile: let him eſchew evil, and do good; let him ſeek peace, and enſue it. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? that is, if ye practiſe goodneſs in the inſtances I have mentioned.

You ſee then what *goodneſs* is, by the inſtances which the ſcripture gives of it; obedience to our ſuperiors and governors, and a conſcientious care of the duties of our ſeveral relations, ſincere love and charity, compaſſion, humility, peace and unity, abſtaining from wrath and revenge, and rendering good for evil: theſe are unqueſtionable inſtances of goodneſs, and paſs for current among all mankind, are on all hands agreed to be good, and have an univerſal approbation among all parties and profeſſions, how wide ſoever their differences may be in other matters.

Theſe are the things which are in ſcripture more peculiarly called good, becauſe they are ſo in themſelves, and in their own nature; and not merely becauſe they are commanded, as the rites and ceremonies of the Jewiſh religion were, which are therefore called by God himſelf, in the prophet, *ſtatutes that were not good.* Ezek. xx. 25. *Wherefore I gave them ſtatutes that were not good;* that is, I gave them laws concerning ſeveral things, which had no intrinſical goodneſs in them. But moral duties, becauſe of the eſſential and eternal goodneſs of them are eminently called good; as in that known paſſage of the Prophet, Micah vi 8. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

The other two fruits of the Spirit which are added in the text, *righteouſneſs* and *truth*, which reſpect likewiſe our converſation with men, more eſpecially in the way of commerce, are rather parts or branches of goodneſs, than really diſtinct from it; but they are two conſiderable virtues, and therefore the Apoſtle thought fit to inſtance particularly in them, after he had mentioned goodneſs,

goodness, which is indeed the general name that comprehends all virtues in it.

The fruit of the Spirit is righteousness, which signifies justice in our dealings and actions with others, and truth, which is justice in our words; for he that speaks as he thinks, and performs and makes good what he promiseth, is said to be just to his word. And all these, goodness, and righteousness, and truth, and whatever particular virtues are comprehended under them, though they be truly and properly moral virtues, yet are said to be fruits of the Spirit.

From the words thus explained, I shall make these four observations, which I shall speak as briefly to as I can.

First, That the fruits of the Spirit are plain and sensible effects, appearing in the disposition and lives of men.

Secondly, That these fruits of the Spirit, here mentioned, are of an eternal and immutable nature, and of perpetual and indispensible obligation.

Thirdly, That moral virtues are the graces and fruits of the Spirit.

Fourthly, That therefore they are by no means to be slighted, as low and mean attainments in religion; but are to be looked upon and esteemed as a main and substantial part of Christianity.

First, That the fruits of the Spirit are real and sensible effects, appearing in the dispositions and lives of men. The Apostle here speaks of what is visible in the lives and conversations of men; for he exhorts Christians to walk as children of the light. Now walking is a metaphor, which signifies the outward conversation and actions of men. *Walk as children of the light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth*; that is, if a man be endowed with the Spirit, it will discover itself by these visible fruits and effects. What the Apostle says of the works of the flesh, Galat. v. 19. *The works of the flesh are manifest*, plainly to be seen in the lives and conversations of men, is equally true of the fruits of the Spirit, that *they also are visible and manifest*; so that by these men may make a judgment of their condition, whether they be true Christians,

Christians, and *the Spirit of God dwell in them*, or not, *viz.* by the temper and disposition of our minds, manifestly appearing in our lives and actions, by the practice of those real virtues which are the proper and genuine fruits of the holy Spirit of God. For religion is not an invisible thing, consisting in mere belief, in height of speculation, and niceties of opinion, or in abstruseness of mystery. The scripture does not place it in things remote from the sight and observation of men; but in real and visible effects, such as may be plainly discerned, and even felt, in the conversation of men; not in abstracted notions, but in substantial virtues, and in a sensible power and efficacy upon the lives of men in all the instances of piety and virtue, of holy and excellent actions. This our Saviour requires of his disciples, that the virtue and holiness of their lives should be so visible and conspicuous, that all men may behold it, and give testimony to it, and glorify God upon that account; Matth. v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* Not that men should make any ostentation of religion, as the Pharisees did of their devotion and alms, which our Saviour censures very severely: but there is a great difference between an affected and vainglorious shew of piety and virtue, and the real and substantial effects of them in a good life, which as they cannot, so they ought not to be hid; nay, on the contrary, men ought, as St James exhorts, James iii. 13. to *shew out of a good conversation their works with meekness of wisdom*, that is, in a wise manner, not with pride and ostentation, but with meekness and humility, the great ornament of all Christian graces and virtues. I proceed to the

Second observation, namely, that the fruits of the Spirit here mentioned, goodness, and righteousness, and truth, are of an eternal and immutable nature, and of perpetual and indispensible obligation. The notions of good and evil, just and unjust, of truth and fidelity, and of falshood and perfidiousness in our words and actions; I say, these notions are born with us, and imprinted in our natures; are so fixed and determined in the very frame of our minds and understandings, that

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as they need not to be explained, so they can never be changed and altered. The difference of good and evil is naturally known, and the notions of righteousness, and goodness, and truth, are fixed antecedently to any divine revelation, which supposeth the nature of them to be known, and therefore doth not go about to define and explain them to us; and supposeth likewise the obligation of them, being branches of the law of nature, and essential parts of that religion which is born with us, and written upon our hearts, and makes us a law to ourselves. And therefore the Christian religion doth only declare these duties more plainly, and press them more earnestly upon us, and enforce the obligation of them by more powerful arguments and considerations, grounded upon clearer discoveries of the grace and mercy of God to mankind, and of the rewards and punishments of another world; but these duties are in their nature still the same, and the Christian religion is so far from releasing us from the obligation of them, that it hath very much heightened it, and bound them the faster upon us. I pass on to the

Third observation from these words, namely, that moral virtues are the graces and fruits of the Spirit. For the three particulars here mentioned by the Apostle are no other but the chief heads and instances of moral duties, goodness, and righteousness, and truth. What are these but moral virtues? And yet it is certain, that they are also Christian graces, because they are here expressly laid to be the fruits of the Spirit.

And they are called moral virtues, because they are such duties as are not enjoined by any positive law, (which is not obligatory from the nature and reason of the thing commanded, but merely from the command;) but are of natural and eternal obligation, and such as we had been bound to the observance of, from the immutable goodness and reason of them, though God had never made any external revelation of his will concerning them: though it cannot be denied but that by the means of external revelation, we have a more clear and certain knowledge of them, and more powerful motives to the practice of them. So that grace and virtue are but two names that signify the same

thing. Virtue ſignifies the abſolute nature and goodneſs of theſe things; grace denotes the cauſe and principle by which theſe virtues are wrought and produced, and are preſerved and increaſed in us, namely, by the free gift of God's holy Spirit to us: for which reaſon, theſe graces and virtues of goodneſs, and righteouſneſs, and truth, which are here mentioned in the text, are ſaid to be the fruits of the Spirit. I come now to the

Fourth and laſt obſervation from the text, namely, that ſince theſe very things which are called moral virtues, are in their nature the very ſame with the graces and fruits of the Spirit, therefore they are by no means to be ſlighted, as low and mean attainments in religion, but to be looked upon and eſteemed as a main and ſubſtantial part of Chriſtianity. They are called the fruits of the Spirit; that is, the natural and genuine effect of that divine power and influence upon the hearts and lives of men, which accompanies the Chriſtian religion; or the happy effects of the Chriſtian religion, wrought in men by the immediate operation and aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit of God, which is conferred upon all Chriſtians in their baptiſm, and does continually dwell and reſide in them, if by wilful ſins they do not grieve him, and drive him away, and provoke him to withdraw himſelf from them.

I do not ſay that theſe virtues are all religion, and all that is neceſſary to make a man a compleat Chriſtian, and a good man: for there muſt be knowledge to direct us in our duty; there muſt be faith, or a hearty aſſent to the revelation of the goſpel, (eſpecially concerning the forgiveneſs of our ſins, and of our juſtification and acceptance with God, for the ſake of the meritorious ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour) to be the root and principle of all religious actions; there muſt be piety and devotion towards God, and the conſtant practice and exerciſe of religious duties in public and private, ſuch as prayer, hearing and reading the word of God, frequent and reverent receiving of the holy ſacrament, which is the beſt and moſt effectual means in the world to make men good, becauſe they are appointed by God, and attended with his bleſſing to that end; I ſay, there muſt be all theſe, becauſe they are the principles and means

means of religion, which are always supposed as necessary to that which is the end. Now the great end of religion, that which Christianity mainly designs to work and perfect in us, are those graces and virtues which are called the fruits of the Spirit; such as those mentioned in the text, goodness, and righteousness, and truth.

And this will be evident to any one that will attentively consider what the scripture says of them; and more especially how our Saviour and his Apostles do every where recommend them to our consideration and practice. Micah vi 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* It is to these qualities and dispositions of goodness, and righteousness, and the like virtues, that our Saviour promises blessedness. These St Peter calls a divine or God-like nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. 5. speaking of the knowledge of the gospel, *Whereby*, says he, *are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature:* and thereupon he exhorts that Christians should *give all diligence to make their calling and election sure*, by adding to the faith of the gospel the several graces and virtues of a good life; these being that divine nature which the gospel designs to make us partakers of.

To speak a little more particularly of the three virtues here mentioned, goodness, righteousness, and truth. These are every where frequently commended and enjoined in the New Testament. Goodness, whether we consider it as it imports charity in general, and our love of one another, our Saviour makes it the great badge and mark of a Christian. *Hereby*, says he, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* St Paul calls it *the fulfilling of the law, and the end of the commandment*, τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας, *the great end and design of the gospel is charity.* St John riseth yet higher, and speaks of it as the very nature and essence of God himself, and that by which we are, as it were, united to him. *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Or whether we consider goodness, under the notion of compassion and beneficence, a readiness to pity, and relieve, and benefit

others according to our ability and opportunities; this the ſcriptures celebrates as a thing highly acceptable to God. Heb. xiii. 16. *But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed.* And St James inſtanceth it as one of the moſt ſignal teſtimonies of true piety, James i. 27. *Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction.* And chap. iii. 17. he makes it a mark and character of the divine and heavenly wildom; *the wiſdom which is from above is full of mercy and good works.*

And then for *righteouſneſs*, of which truth and fidelity in our intercouſe with men is a conſiderable part, St Paul inſtanceth it, in the firſt place, as a principal thing wherein the kingdom of God doth conſiſt, Rom. xiv. 17 *The kingdom of God doth not conſiſt in meats and drinks*; that is, the power and efficacy of the Chriſtian religion, or the goſpel, (which is frequently in the New Teſtament called *the kingdom of God*) doth not conſiſt in zeal about indifferent things, but in the ſubſtantial virtues of a good life, in righteouſneſs and peace.

You ſee by all this, at what a rate the ſcripture magnifies theſe virtues, as the great things of religion, the end of the goſpel, and that wherein our Chriſtianity does mainly conſiſt. The conſideration whereof would make a man ſtand amazed, to think how theſe virtues ſhould ever fall into ſo much contempt among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, and do every day read the bible; and come to be accounted but low and pitiful things in compariſon of I know not what fancies and conceits, wherein ſome are pleaſed to place religion. For what can the beſt religion that ever was in the world, which Chriſtianity certainly is, be better placed in, than in theſe and the like virtues? all which are ſo excellent in their nature and uſe, and have ſo direct a tendency, both to the happineſs of particular perſons ſingly conſidered, and of human ſociety; and ſeveral of them, eſpecially thoſe inſtanced in, in the text, goodneſs, and righteouſneſs, and truth, are the very nature and perfection of God himſelf.

And what more worthy to be the fruits of the holy Spirit

Spirit of God, and the effects of a divine power and influence working upon the minds of men, than such qualities and dispositions as render us so like to God, and do so nearly resemble the highest excellencies and perfections of the divine nature? and therefore our Saviour useth this as an argument to persuade us to be good, and merciful, and patient; because these qualities are so near a resemblance and imitation of the divine perfection, the nearest that creatures are capable of. Mat. v. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

And thus I have dispatched the four observations from the text; that the fruits of the Spirit are plain and sensible effects, appearing in the dispositions and lives of men; that they are of an eternal and immutable nature, and of perpetual and indispensible obligation; and though they be moral virtues, yet they are likewise the fruits of the Spirit, and are by no means to be slighted and undervalued as low and mean attainments in religion.

All that now remains is to make some inferences from what has been discoursed on this text.

And if this discourse be true, then the want of these virtues mentioned in the text, and the reigning of the contrary vices in us, is a clear and undeniable evidence, notwithstanding all our fair professions and pretences, that we are not true Christians. For if we do not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, we have not the Spirit of Christ; and then St Paul hath determined our case, that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* If these Christian graces and virtues mentioned in the text, goodness, and righteousness, and truth, do not shine forth in our lives and conversations, it is plain, according to the Apostle's reasoning in this and other texts, that we are not children of the light, because we do not walk as children of the light, as those that are enlightened by the Spirit of God; for the fruit of the Spirit, or the fruit of light, as some copies have it, is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. And if these fruits be not found in us, it is a plain evidence that we do not walk in the Spirit, that we are not led and guided by the Spirit of God; for the fruits of the

Spirit, as well as the works of the flesh, are manifest, sufficiently plain and visible in the conversations of men; and according as we fulfil the lusts of the one, or bring forth the fruits of the other, we may certainly judge whether we have the Spirit of Christ or not, that is, whether we be true Christians, or do only usurp a name, and take a title to ourselves, which does not of right belong to us. We need not to trouble and puzzle ourselves with a great many doubtful and obscure marks, to find out by them what our state and condition is, and whether we be the children of God or not: if we have a mind to know it, we may soon bring the matter to an issue, by looking into our own hearts and lives, whether the fruits of the Spirit be there, in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, and in all those virtues which are elsewhere mentioned as fruits of the Spirit. These are plain and sensible things; and if these virtues be in us, they cannot be hid from ourselves or others, but will shine forth in our lives and conversations, in all our words and actions. Goodness is soon seen; it hath a native beauty and brightness in it, which draws the eyes of men towards it; and it discovers itself by its effects, which are perceived and felt in those upon whom it is exercised. Righteousness and truth are likewise very sensible to ourselves and others; and so are the contrary dispositions and practices. No man does an unjust thing, but his conscience tells him he does so; no man speaks contrary to truth, or breaks his word and promise, but he is guilty to himself of so doing. And thus I might instance in all other virtues and vices. If we will but look into ourselves, and observe our own actions, we may easily discern, whether we be malicious and envious, cruel and hard-hearted, censorious and uncharitable; or good, and kind, and merciful, and ready to forgive; whether we make conscience of our word or not; and whether we do to others, as we would have them do to us. Nothing is more easy to be known than it is, which of these qualities does possess and rule our hearts, and govern and bear sway in our lives. And if we can know this, we know whether we have the fruits of the Spirit, or not; *for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.*

truth. And by these fruits of the Spirit, or the want of them, which are both very discernible, we may know what our state and condition is, whether we have the Spirit of God, and be true and sincere Christians. A great many men tire themselves in an endless enquiry concerning the good estate of their souls towards God, whether they be the children of God, and whether they have the Spirit of God or not; and are trying themselves all their lives by obscure and uncertain marks, which will never bring the matter to any clear issue, but leave them still in the dark, and in doubt, concerning their own sincerity, and the integrity of their hearts towards God: and how can it be otherwise, since they have been so often told by unskilful men, that they cannot know their own hearts, and consequently can never be assured of their own integrity and sincerity? This, I must confess, is but an ill sign of sincerity, when we find it so hard a matter to discern it in ourselves. Job found it clearly in himself, and was very confidently assured of it; Job xxvii. 5 6. *Till I die*, says he, *I will not remove my integrity from me: My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.* But if a man cannot know his own heart, and whether he have integrity or not, how shall he know either when he parts with it, or when he holds it fast? The Apostle in the text gives us a sure mark whereby we may know when we have the Spirit of God, by the sensible fruits and effects of it.

I will conclude all with the Apostle's exhortation, Phil. iv. 8. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* Think of them, and regard them as principal parts of your duty, and particular instances of that universal goodness which Christianity teaches and requires, as the proper and genuine effects of that grace of God which hath appeared to all men, and brings salvation, that is, of the gospel. And if the doctrine of the gospel do not produce these blessed fruits and effects in the hearts and lives of those who profess the Christian religion; then, as the Apostle to the Hebrews reasons, *How shall*

ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation? which was at firſt ſpoken by the Lord, and afterwards confirmed by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.

SERMON CCIII.

The neceſſity of ſupernatural grace, in order to a Chriſtian life.

JOHN XV. 5.

——*For without me ye can do nothing.*

IN the beginning of this chapter our Saviour compares his myſtical body, that is, his church, to a vine, which his Father, whom he compares to a husbandman, hath planted. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* To repreſent to us the union that is betwixt Chriſt and all true Chriſtians, and the influence of grace and ſpiritual life, which all that are united to him do derive and receive from him, he ſets it forth to us by the reſemblance of a vine and branches. As there is a natural and vital union between the vine and the branches, ſo there is a ſpiritual vital union between Chriſt and true Chriſtians; and this union is the cauſe of our fruitfulneſs in the works of obedience and a good life. There are ſome indeed that ſeem to be grafted into Chriſt by an outward profeſſion of Chriſtianity, who yet derive no influence from him, ſo as to bring forth fruit, becauſe they are not vitally united to him; theſe the husbandman will lop off, and take away, as unprofitable and dead branches: ver. 2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away*; that is, they who only make an outward profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, but do not bring forth the fruits of obedience and a good life, ſhall be finally ſeparated from him; *and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth*

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it, that it may bring forth more fruit. And because all our fruitfulness depends upon our union with Christ, as the fruitfulness of the branches depends upon their union with the vine, therefore he bids us be careful that this union be preserved and continued, ver. 4. *Abide in me, and I in you.* We are planted into Christ by faith, and the belief of his doctrine, and we abide in him by a firm purpose and resolution of obedience. So they are said to abide and continue in Christ's word, who obey and practise his doctrine. John viii. 31. *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* So St James explains it, James i. 25. *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty*, that is, the Christian doctrine, *and continueth therein*; How is that? *he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* And 1 John iii. 6. *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not.*

Abide in me, and I in you. Christ is said to abide in us by the continual aids and influences of his grace and holy Spirit; and if we abide in him, by the resolution of obedience, his grace and assistance will be continually derived to us, to bring this good resolution to effect, and to enable us to bring forth fruit. *For as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me ye can do nothing*; χωρὶς ἐμοῦ, *out of me*, being separated from me, *ye can do nothing.*

There are two things to be explained in the words, and then I shall come to the assertion or proposition contained in them.

First, What is here meant by being *without Christ*, or *out of him.*

Secondly, In what sense, and with what limitations, we are to understand that expression, *we can do nothing.*

First, What is here meant by being *without Christ*, or *out of him. Out of me ye can do nothing*; that is, unless we be united to him, and by virtue of that union derive from him the supernatural aids and influences of his grace, *we can do nothing.* It is true indeed, that without

out God we can do nothing; we cannot think, or ſpeak, or do any natural action, without the common aſſiſtance and concurrence of his providence; *for in him we live, and move, and have our being.* But this aſſiſtance is natural and ordinary, and commonly afforded to every man in the world; but the grace and aſſiſtance of Chriſt ſignifies ſomething extraordinary and ſupernatural, that which divines mean by ſupernatural grace, in oppoſition to the ordinary concurrence of divine providence to all the actions of men.

Secondly, In what ſenſe, and with what limitations, we are to underſtand that expreſſion, *we can do nothing: without me ye can do nothing.* And this is neceſſary to be limited to ſuch effects as our Saviour was ſpeaking of, *viz.* the proper acts of a Chriſtian life, obedience to the laws and precepts of the goſpel, which our Saviour here, in purſuance of the allegory, calls *bearing fruit*, and *bringing forth much fruit.* For if it be not thus limited, but extended to all kind of actions, natural or civil, it is not true that we cannot do theſe without ſupernatural aſſiſtance, and the grace of Chriſt; for theſe we may do by the common and natural aſſiſtance and concurrence of God, equally afforded to men: nay, more than this, we may by this common aſſiſtance do thoſe actions which tend to make us ſpiritually good, and are the means appointed by God for that purpoſe. We may go to church, we may read and hear God's word, and upon the hearing of it may reflect upon the actions of our lives, and may be convinced of our ſin and danger, and upon this conviction may beg God's mercy and grace to reform and grow better. But then we cannot effect this without ſupernatural grace and aſſiſtance; ſo that this aſſertion here in the text is to be limited to the purpoſes of regeneration, and ſanctification, and perſeverance in holineſs; that a man cannot make himſelf good, he cannot convert and change himſelf, nor by his own ſtrength continue and hold out in a good courſe; we can do nothing of this, without the grace and aſſiſtance of Chriſt.

So that the plain deſign of this propoſition here in the text is to aſſert the neceſſity of ſupernatural grace, to make men good, and to make them perſevere in a courſe

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of holiness and obedience. In speaking to this argument, I shall,

First, Shew what it is we mean by the supernatural grace and assistance of Christ.

Secondly, That to this the scripture doth constantly attribute our regeneration, and sanctification, and perseverance in holiness.

Thirdly, That there is great reason to assert the necessity of God's supernatural grace and assistance to these purposes.

Fourthly, That this supernatural grace and assistance does not exclude but suppose the concurrence of our own endeavours.

Fifthly, That this grace and assistance is derived to us from our union with Christ.

First, What we mean by the supernatural grace and assistance of Christ. Whatever natural powers we have to do any thing is from God, and an effect of his goodness: but God considering the lapsed and decayed condition of mankind, sent his Son into the world, to recover us out of that sinful and miserable condition into which we are fallen, to reveal eternal life to us, and the way to it, and to purchase happiness for us, and to offer it to us upon certain terms and conditions to be performed by us: but we being weak and without strength, slaves to sin, and under the power of evil habits, and unable to free ourselves from this bondage by any natural power left in us, our blessed Saviour, in great pity and tenderness to mankind, hath in his gospel offered, and is ready to afford to us an extraordinary assistance of his grace and holy Spirit, to supply the defects of our natural power and strength. And this supernatural grace of Christ is that alone which can enable us to perform what he requires of us. And this, according to the several uses and occasions of it, is by divines called by several names: as it puts good motions into us, and excites and stirs us up to that which is good, it is called *preventing grace*, because it prevents any motion or desire on our parts; as it assists and strengthens us in the doing of any thing that is good, it is called *assisting grace*; as it keeps us constant in a good course, it is called *persevering grace*; and may have several other denominations

minations, in ſeveral other reſpects; for it is ſuited to all our occaſions and neceſſities.

Secondly, To this grace and aſſiſtance of God the ſcripture doth conſtantly attribute our regeneration, and ſanctification, and perſeverance in holineſs. We are ſaid to be *born again of the Spirit*, to be *ſanctified by the renewing of the holy Ghoſt*, to be *led by the Spirit of God, and thro' the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the fleſh; to do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening us, and to be kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation.* All which, and many more texts that I might inſtance in, do plainly expreſs to us the ſupernatural aſſiſtance of Chriſt, whereby we become good, and are enabled to do any thing that is good, and preſerved and continued in a good courſe. As the ſcripture doth every where attribute ſin to our own corrupt hearts, and to the temptation and and inſtigation of the devil; ſo does it conſtantly aſcribe all the good that we do to the grace of Chriſt, or, which is all one, to the bleſſed motions and aſſiſtances of God's holy Spirit. For *the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Chriſt*, yea Chriſt, Rom. viii. 9. 10. *But ye are not in the fleſh, but in the Spirit, if ſo be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his. And if Chriſt be in you, the body is dead becauſe of ſin.* By which it is evident that *the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Chriſt*, and Chriſt, do in this text ſignify one and the ſame thing.

Thirdly, There is great reaſon to aſſert the neceſſity of this grace and aſſiſtance to theſe purpoſes, whether we conſider the corruption and impotency of human nature, the ſtrange power of evil habits and cuſtoms, the ſickleneſs and inconſtancy of human reſolution, or the malice and activity of the devil to ſeduce and tempt us to ſin.

1. If we conſider the corruption and impotency of human nature. This the light of nature cannot but acknowledge. The philoſophers and wiſe men among the Heathens were ſenſible of a great depravation in our ſouls, and degeneracy from the divine life; and therefore they preſcribed ſeveral ways and methods for the purifying of our ſouls, and the raiſing of them to that purity and perfection to which they ſuppoſed they were deſigned:

designed: but they were wholly ignorant from whence this depravation came; and therefore many of them supposed a pre-existence of souls; that is, that our souls, which now inhabit these bodies, had lived in a former state, and for some faults they had commited in that state, were by the justice of God sentenced to be imprisoned in these bodies, as a punishment for their former sins. They could not imagine that our souls came impure out of God's hands; and to avoid that inconvenience, they imagined a former state wherein they had sinned. And this was the best account they could give of the general depravation of mankind.

But the scripture hath given us a more certain account of this; that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* This is the true source and original of the universal degeneracy of mankind, and of the weakness and impotency of human nature. The fall of our first parents hath derived corruption and weakness upon the whole race and posterity of Adam; for *whatsoever is born of the flesh, is flesh.*

So that considering our natural impotency, there is great need of a supernatural and extraordinary power and assistance, to recover us from this degeneracy, and *to renew us after the image of him who created us in righteousness and true holiness.* And therefore when the scripture speaks of the redemption of Christ, it represents our condition, not only as miserable, but helpless; Rom. v. 6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* When mankind was under an utter impotency of recovering itself out of that state of sin and misery into which it was plunged, *in the fulness of time*, that is, when God thought it most convenient, *he sent his Son into the world, to die for sinners; and by that Spirit which raised him from the dead*, to enable us to mortify our lusts, and *to rise to newness of life.*

2. The necessity of this grace and assistance will farther appear, if we consider the strange power of evil habits and customs. The other is a natural, and this a contracted impotency, whereby men make themselves much weaker than they were by nature. The habits of sin being added to our natural impotency, are like so

many diſeaſes ſuperinduced upon a conſtitution naturally weak, which do all help to increaſe the man's infirmity. Evil habits in ſcripture are compared to bonds and fetters, which do as effectually hinder a man from motion and putting forth himſelf to action, as if he were quite lame, hand and foot. Habit and cuſtom is a kind of ſecond nature; and ſo far as any thing is natural, ſo far it is neceſſary, and we cannot do otherwiſe. By paſſing from one degree of ſin to another, men become fixed and hardened in their wickedneſs, and do inſenſibly bring themſelves into that ſtate, out of which they are utterly unable to recover themſelves. When men have been long accuſtomed to evil, and are once grown old in vice, it is as hard to reform and rectify them as to recover a body bowed down with age, to its firſt ſtraightneſs. When men have continued long in a ſinful courſe, they are almoſt under a fatal neceſſity of being wicked, and under all imaginable diſadvantages of contributing any thing to their own recovery. The ſcripture repreſents the condition of ſuch perſons to us, by ſuch things as are naturally impoſſible. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his ſpots? Then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil.* Now this conſideration added to the former, to the impotency of nature, the ſtrength of evil habits, is ſtill a farther evidence of the neceſſity of ſupernatural grace and aſſiſtance for our recovery. For the greater our impotency is, ſo much more need is there of an extraordinary power and aſſiſtance, to enable us to do our duty.

3. This will yet farther appear, if we conſider the inconſtancy and fickleneſs of human reſolution. Suppoſe that upon hearing the terrible threatnings of God's word againſt ſin, or upon the natural checks and convictions of conſcience for having done wickedly, a ſinner ſhould of himſelf, as there is reaſon enough for it, entertain a purpoſe and reſolution of breaking off his ſinful courſe; yet how unable would this reſolution be to withſtand the powerful aſſaults of temptation, and the violent returns of his own inclinations to his former luſts? This almoſt every man finds by his own frequent and ſad experience, how inconſtant his mind is to his own purpoſes, and how unfaithful and treacherous to his moſt ſolemn and ſevere

severe resolutions; how false we are to ourselves, and to the vows and promises we have made to God, and our own souls, when the occasions and temptations of sin present themselves to us. So that our need of God's grace is in no case more plain and evident, than to keep us stedfast to our resolution of forsaking our sins, and amending our lives; and without this, we find how uncertain and ineffectual all our good purposes are, *like the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away.* So that we must say with the prophet Jeremy, chap. x. 23. *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.*

4. Besides all these disadvantages from ourselves, from the impotency of our natures, and the strength of our lusts, and the inconstancy of our resolutions, we have likewise a powerful enemy without, the devil, who is very malicious and active to promote our ruin, by keeping us in this slavery. He is the great enemy of our souls, and his malice will not suffer him to neglect any opportunity of doing us mischief. He observes and watcheth our tempers and dispositions, and accordingly plants his temptations, and plays them upon us, where we are weakest, and they may do the greatest execution. So that we are not only weak within, but strongly assaulted without; *We wrestle not only with flesh and blood; but with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses.* All the powers of darkness are combined against us, to work our destruction; and therefore we have need of an extraordinary strength and assistance, to enable us to contend with such powerful adversaries, upon so many disadvantages. And our comfort is, that God offers his grace to us, and *that is sufficient for us. Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.* The Spirit that dwells in good men, and is ready to assist them to all good purposes, is stronger than that evil spirit which is in the world, and *goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

Fourthly, This supernatural grace and assistance does not exclude, but suppose the concurrence of our endeavours. The grace of God does not do all, without any concurrence on our part. It strengthens and assists us;

but does not produce the whole effect, without any activity or endeavour of ours. When our Saviour ſays, *Without me ye can do nothing*, he does imply, that by the aſſiſtance of grace we may perform all the duties of the Chriſtian life, we may *bear fruit, and bring forth much fruit*. And to keep to the metaphor in the text, the branches of a vine are not merely paſſive, but contribute their part to the production of fruit, though they derive continual ſupplies of ſap and virtue from the vine. When the Apoſtle ſays, *I can do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening me*, he does not think it a diſparagement to the grace of Chriſt, to ſay, *he could do all things* by the aſſiſtance of it. He acknowledgeth his own impotency and weakneſs, and glories in the ſtrength and aſſiſtance of Chriſt. But an acknowledgment of impotency does not exclude endeavour; for impotency does not ſignify an utter want of power, but the weakneſs and inſufficiency of it, that it is diſproportioned to the work and duty required. So that though *we are not ſufficient of ourſelves* for any thing that is good; yet being aſſiſted by God, we may co-operate with him to the killing of ſin, to *the cleanſing of ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and to the perfecting of holineſs in the fear of God*. As the Apoſtles were *workers together with God* in the ſalvation of others, 2 Cor. vi. 11. *We then, as workers together with God, beſeech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*; I ſay, as they were *workers together with God* in the ſalvation of others, ſo may we be ſaid to be, in *working out our own ſalvation*; nay, we are commanded to be ſo, Phil. ii. 12. 13. *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do*. So that God's preventing and aſſiſting grace, his *working in us both to will and to do*, is ſo far from excluding our endeavours, that it is uſed by the Apoſtle as a ſtrong reaſon and argument to the contrary, *Work out your own ſalvation: for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure*. And if this were not ſo, all the exhortations of ſcripture were to no purpoſe, *our preaching were vain*, and your hearing vain: for nothing can be vainer, than to perſuade men to do their duty,

duty, if this be true, that God does all, and we do nothing.

Fifthly and laſtly, This grace and aſſiſtance is derived to us from our union with Chriſt. So ſoon as we believe in him, and heartily embrace his doctrine, we are united to him; and if we continue in this faith, *we abide in him, and he in us*; and by virtue of this union, the influences of his grace, the aids and aſſiſtances of his Spirit are derived to us, to all the purpoſes of holineſs and obedience, to enable us *to do the will of God, and patiently continue in well doing, and to preſerve us to his heavenly kingdom.*

There is no other myſtery in this union, than that which I have plainly told you, that it is effected by our becoming the diſciples of Chriſt, and ſincerely embracing his doctrine; that it is continued by our bringing forth the fruits of holineſs and obedience. By this we become *branches of that true vine*; and being ſo, derive ſap and virtue from him, the vital influences of his grace and holy Spirit, to aſſiſt us in our duty, and to make us to be *fruitful in every good work, and to abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and the glory of God.*

But when I ſay this grace and aſſiſtance is derived to us from our union, I do not intend to exclude the neceſſity of God's grace and holy Spirit to the converſion of a ſinner, and his firſt planting into Chriſt: but when we ſay that Chriſtians derive the influences of grace and aſſiſtance from their union with Chriſt, this ſuppoſeth them to be Chriſtians already, and planted into Chriſt, and that this likewiſe is the work of God's grace. For if we cannot bring forth fruit, without the aid and aſſiſtance of his grace, much leſs without that could we be planted into him, and united with him.

I ſhall conclude my diſcourſe upon this ſubject, with three or four inferences from what hath been delivered.

I. If the grace of God be ſo neceſſary to all the ends of holineſs and obedience, and to our preſervance in a good courſe, then there is great reaſon why we ſhould continually depend upon God, and every day earneſtly pray to him for the aids and aſſiſtances of his grace, and the influence of his holy Spirit, to guide, and direct, and

ſtrengthen

ſtrengthen us in all goodneſs, and *to keep us by his mighty power through faith unto ſalvation.* For though God hath promiſed his aſſiſtance to us, and is always ready to afford it; yet we are to remember, that it is a free diſpenſation of his grace and goodneſs; *He works in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure.* And the promiſe of this grace is not ſo abſolute, but that he expects we ſhould earneſtly ſue and beg to him for it. He hath not promiſed his holy Spirit, but *to them that ask him,* and that with great earneſtneſs and importunity; *we muſt ask, and ſeek, and knock.* Even where he promiſeth *to give us a new heart and a new ſpirit;* yet he ſays, that *for all theſe things he will be ſought to by the houſe of Iſrael.* And though ſometimes *he be found of them that ſeek him not,* and do frequently prevent us with his grace, and the motions of his bleſſed Spirit; yet we have no reaſon to expect it without our ſeeking of it.

II. We ſhould thankfully acknowledge and aſcribe all the good that is in us, and all that we do, to the grace and aſſiſtance of God, exciting and ſtrengthening us to every good work, without which *we can do nothing,* and ſay with David, *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord; but to thy name be the praiſe.* And with St. Paul, *Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* As the children of Iſrael were brought out of Egypt, and conducted to the poſſeſſion of the good land, which is a type of heaven, by the preſence and power of God going along with them, *not by their own ſword and bow, but by a mighty hand, and an outſtretched arm;* ſo if ever we be reſcued from the bondage of ſin, and quickened to newneſs of life, if ever we be ſaved, and come to heaven, we muſt be aſſiſted, and conducted, and *kept by the mighty power of God: for by grace we are ſaved, and that not of ourſelves, for it is the gift of God.*

III. Let us take heed that we *reſiſt not the Spirit of God, and receive not this grace of God in vain.* And this we do, whenever we reſiſt the motions of God's bleſſed Spirit, and do not make uſe of that grace and aſſiſtance which God offers to us, by being *workers together with God,* and co-operating with his grace by our own ſincere endeavours. God's Spirit doth frequently put good motions

motions into us, and is ready to further them, if we comply with them, and to enable us to bring them to effect; but men may, and many times do *resist the Holy Ghost*, and quench the motions of that blessed Spirit of grace; and then God justly leaves us, and withdraws his assistance, and takes away his holy Spirit from us. But if we comply with them, his grace and help is ready to carry us still farther, and to assist us more and more, that we may *go from strength to strength, till we come to appear before him in Sion.*

IV. The consideration of our own impotency is no excuse to our sloth and negligence, if so be the grace of God be ready to assist us. For if that be offered to us, and always at hand to help us, where men have not provoked God to withdraw it; then it is our own fault, if we do not do our duty, and if we fall short of eternal happiness. For we are really able to do all that which God's grace and assistance is ready to enable us to do. St. Paul reckons upon the strength of Christ as in some sense his power. *I am able to do all things through Christ strengthening me.*

V. And lastly, The consideration of our own impotency is no just ground of discouragement to our endeavours, considering the promise of divine grace and assistance. Now that God is entered into a new covenant of grace with us, and offers us eternal life upon the conditions of faith, and repentance, and sincere obedience, the greater our weakness is, the more reason we have to expect his grace and assistance; because we know that he deals sincerely with us, and intends to bring us to that happiness which he offers to us; and therefore we are assured that he does not command us impossibilities; and seeing we are weak and insufficient of ourselves to do what he requires of us, that he is ready to afford us his grace to enable us to do it.

The end of the Eighth Volume.